

1997

Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism>

Recommended Citation

Editors, Criticism (1997) "Book Reviews," *Criticism*: Vol. 39: Iss. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol39/iss1/5>

Making A Social Body: British Culture Formation, 1830–1864 by Mary Poovey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. x + 255. \$34.00 cloth. \$12.95 paper.

The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire by Christopher Lane. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Pp. xiii + 326. \$49.95 cloth. \$16.95 paper.

The body has been the focus of much literary criticism for the last couple of decades. At first this criticism focused on the body itself, but before long attention turned to affiliated subjects, such as sexuality and disease. A natural extension of these interests was the “unnatural” uses of the body, and gay criticism prospered. Another extension of body writing has become figurative, where not the body itself but only tropes for it are concerned—as with the feminist and postcolonial tendency to read nature or the mysterious East gendered as female. The two books under review here are representative of the later uses of the body as a focus for critical discussion. Mary Poovey’s *Making a Social Body* examines the rhetorical figure of the body employed in social arguments; Christopher Lane’s *The Ruling Passion* studies colonial narratives in which homosexuality must “fall out of representation to allow other meanings to prevail” (232). In both books, the body itself, though never absent as a figure, is displaced in favor of some other objective—social engineering in Poovey’s work, colonial mastery in Lane’s.

Poovey’s central argument is that during the first half of the nineteenth century in England the image of a body politic was replaced by that of a social body. Through the imposition of what she calls abstract space—a Euclidian “conceptual grid”—a “disaggregation of the social” occurred that led to institutional control and the development of disciplinary individualism. Competing during this period with the image of society as a body (domestic feminization) was the image of society as a machine (dispassionate functionality). One virtue of Poovey’s study is her acceptance of such alternative views in the thinking of the time. She is aware that there is no single, dominating belief that works in all of the domains she describes or that accommodates all classes, genders, and ethnic groups. Because of this awareness of complexity, her examinations are all the more satisfying in the focused points they make.

The various chapters of this book began as separate essays and read that way still, including the repetition of evidence from one application to another. Two focus on James Phillips Kay’s socio-medical studies of the poor in Manchester. One chapter shows how Kay’s metaphors of the social body reinforced stereotypes of the Irish: “Kay’s image of a healthy social body cannot accommodate the Irish because—especially in their domestic habits—they are not human” (64). Another chapter concentrates on the emergence of what Poovey calls “anatomical realism” as a way to deal with the new phenomenon of the working populations of industrial cities. This new classification scheme applied the traditional medical notion of a body supervised by a nervous system to a normative model. In short, a theory of the normative physical body was transferred to a normative social body, with predictable results for the different classes. Chapters on Thomas Chadwick’s campaign

for the New Poor Law of 1834 and his 1842 *Sanitary Report* demonstrate similar forces at work. The New Poor Law proved extraordinarily unpopular, and it exposed the weakness of Chadwick's reasoning and of his underlying metaphors: "Far from implementing a system that simply reflected the universal wishes of the public at large, the 1834 act had imposed a normalizing system of values on a population whose heterogeneity and attachment to traditional forms of morality, justice, and relief resisted such rationalization" (111).

Oddly enough, since Poovey is a professor of English, it is the chapters on the fiction of Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Dickens that are disappointing. Chiefly they aim to show how the aesthetic domain functioned to affect other domains in the social structure—the political in Disraeli and Gaskell, the economic in Dickens. But the homoerotic reading of *Coningsby* is somewhat strained, and the analysis of speculation and virtue in *Our Mutual Friend* is not very original. In the first case, Poovey tries to read Coningsby's normal, if intense, friendship with Oswald Millbank as a scarcely masked homosexual attachment, an interpretation that ignores the conventional presentation of strong male friendships in Victorian literature. In the second case, many scholars have already explored the role of financial speculation in Dickens's novel, myself included a decade ago. Nonetheless, as a study of rhetorical forces at work in nineteenth-century England, Poovey's book is a model of open-mindedness and careful research.

Like Poovey, Lane is laudably conscious of alternative views. His project, he admits, could not even be begun until he "relinquished the fantasy of uncovering or recovering a single and self-evident 'colonial homosexuality' in British literature" (xi). Instead, he looks at many colonial factors brought to bear on the symbolization of masculinity and homosexuality. His book argues "that we miss a crucial element of colonial history when we ignore or dismiss the influence of unconscious identification, fantasy, and conflict on these political events" (3). His guides in this investigation are Freud and Lacan, and, as with all attempts to explore the repressed and the displaced, there is a danger here that we interpret signs as we do because of what is in us not because of what is "hidden" in the text. To manipulate evidence to show what is *not* stated is a delicate endeavor and one at which psychoanalytic critics frequently fail. But Lane is fully aware of the difficulty before him. His fundamental aim is clear enough. His purpose is "to interpret the influence of resistant and generally unassimilable homosexual drives, proposing that sexual desire between men frequently ruptured Britain's imperial allegory by shattering national unity and impeding the entire defeat of subject groups" (41).

Lane covers a diverse group, writing on Rudyard Kipling, A. E. W. Mason, Ryder Haggard, Henry James, Oscar Wilde, Max Beerbohm, Joseph Conrad, W. Somerset Maugham, E. M. Forster, Ronald Firbank, Siegfried Sassoon, and Saki. He is unevenly successful in these treatments, sometimes because his subject matter is not particularly fecund (as with Firbank and Saki), sometimes because his evidence is unconvincing (as with Conrad and Sassoon). Although he protests that Firbank and Saki have been underrated, Lane is unable to demonstrate that their works, aside from the particular light he trains upon them, are substantial works of art. His speculations

about Sassoon's homoerotic interests are not supported by adequate evidence. See the next paragraph for my objections to his reading of Conrad's *Victory*. On the whole, though, Lane's approach is sensible and rewarding. His description of how Kipling asserts the need, in colonial settings, to restrain all sexual desire, a need that makes of women a dangerous negative force, is persuasive, as is his similar argument concerning distrust of the female and the displacement of homosocial eroticism in Mason's *The Four Feathers* and Haggard's *Nada the Lily*.

One difficulty with this study is that it tends to drift away from its British colonial focus. *Nada the Lily*, for example, is about Zulul. Conrad's *Victory* has a wandering, expatriate Swede as its protagonist, who does not serve British colonial interests. And James, Wilde, and Beerbohm are only tangentially associated with colonialism. But generally Lane adheres to his central argument, which seems to work best—with the important exception of Kipling—when it deals with texts by known homosexual authors. Perhaps "outing" the hidden homosexuality in a text is easier with biographical assistance. Lane's one spectacular misreading, in my view, is his chapter on Conrad, where he tries to inflate the business friendship between Morrison and Heyst to a homoerotic association linked to Heyst's relationship with his father, and where he claims that Schomberg's competition with Heyst masks a homoerotic desire. These readings, it seems to me, fly in the face of what the text delivers.

Both of these books are working a broad field that is currently fashionable, but both approach this field with coherent theoretical tools and with a clear-mindedness that acknowledges the limitations of their projects. Both include important insights with broad applications, and both extend the boundaries of the territories they explore. They demonstrate that careful scholarship, not jargon or imitative theoretical schemes, makes fashionable subjects important subjects.

Wayne State University

John R. Reed

Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City by Deborah Epstein Nord. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. Pp. 270 + xiv. \$16.95 paper.

Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria by Evelyne Ender. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. Pp. 307 + xi. \$17.95 paper.

Both of these books concern themselves with nineteenth-century female pathologies: the figure of the "fallen woman," in Nord's case, and in Ender's study, the hysteric. Both use contemporary theory in sophisticated ways, although they differ markedly in almost every other respect: in their theoretical ambitions, in their use of cultural materials, and, most importantly, in their feminist evaluations of deviance.

Deborah Nord begins her book from the commonplace perception that nineteenth-century urban observers are always male, and always dependent

upon a masculine incognito in order to explore urban spaces freely. But Nord goes beyond this familiar notion to make a series of important observations about women as the object of urban gazing, and to pose provocative questions about what happens when women writers did, in fact, seek to become observers rather than the observed. To turn her study of urban observation to questions of gender, Nord focuses on a widely-recognized paradigm within nineteenth-century urban spectatorship—the dialectic of detachment from and contamination by the urban crowd that is displayed by nineteenth-century flaneurs—and she argues that at the center of this dialectic is the figure of the fallen woman. That is, rather than being a fixed figure of social and moral condemnation, the prostitute carries a polyvalent range of meanings that emblemize ambivalent attitudes toward urban life: the prostitute is an analogue of the male stroller's alienated, isolated self; an accomplice in urban pleasure; an icon of social suffering; a symbolic means of quarantining certain social ills; and an agent of connection and contamination. The range of these associations allowed the fallen woman to become a sign for all urban social relations, not just for urban decadence. These associations were dynamic, since investigators of prostitutes helped generate new myths about the ways urban problems could penetrate the middle-class home, or about resemblances between the middle-class wife and the prostitute.

Eloquently calling upon a wide range of materials, Nord moves, in the first part of her book, from popular journalism to the essays of Lamb, Egan, and De Quincey, and, finally, to the novels of Dickens, including along the way references to architectural history, urban planning, and traditions of urban illustration, in order to provide a wonderfully detailed, historicized narrative about the evolution of tropes of the city, as figured through female sexuality. She charts how images of the city as a theater, common in urban writing of the 1820s, yield to a rhetoric of contamination as middle-class attitudes come to dominate the discourse of urban observation. Her account shows in striking ways how the figure of the prostitute changes as it echoes these shifts. Throughout, Nord's account is careful, informative, and scrupulously researched, if a bit desultory.

Nord's argument about the gendering of urban observation can seem monolithic at times. She minimizes how male sexuality could be symbolic of social ills, and she neglects the gender inversions so frequent in a novelist like Dickens—inversions that would greatly complicate her sexing of observers and observed. But she is very instructive on the way images of female sexuality could mediate ambivalence about urban reform, or about industrial progress reflected in the changing city. Moreover, she is entirely convincing when she isolates the pattern of female redemption in nineteenth-century narrative, in which the movement of a plot from fallen woman to good mother could symbolize the reformation of middle-class urban culture, and in which female sexuality becomes a fulcrum for social criticism.

Much more important to her project, though, is the second part of the book, and the questions it raises about what happens when women writers try to become urban observers—or at least try to imagine what it would be like to be a woman walking the streets. Nord argues that the particular vision of the female spectator, novelist, or investigator derives from the central

contradictions women faced: the consciousness of transgression, the vexed sexuality female observation implies, and the struggle to escape the status of spectacle without losing a feminist identification with the objects of one's vision. With these problems of split identifications in mind, Nord argues that, rather than assuming the absence of nineteenth-century female spectatorship, we might ask what discourses shaped its forms and contradictions, as the possibilities for female spectatorship began to increase. Looking particularly at the travel writings of a Frenchwoman, Flora Tristan (the first woman to write a nonfictional account of London), and the social novels of Elizabeth Gaskell, Nord shows in this section how analysis completely failed women writers at mid-century when they turned to the figure of the prostitute. She also shows how these women writers ultimately idealized motherhood—especially working-class motherhood—as a panacea for social ills, thus surrendering their new-found authority as female writers to their anxieties about the contradictions of female social authority. Nord argues that Tristan accepted her status as a peripatetic pariah, for example, only so long as it did not fully separate her from her identity as a mother. In Gaskell's case, Nord shows through an extraordinary set of readings how Gaskell's political and sexual plots are linked, and how her various rewritings of the fallen woman story are grounded in the traumas of her own fears about public exposure. More than anything else, what this important and innovative part of Nord's work shows is how powerful, and how unavoidable, was the sexualization of women's entry into urban space and public life.

However, this most original stage of Nord's project will also excite the most controversy. For some, it will furnish the explanation for certain elements of anti-feminism in a number of Victorian women writers. But for others, Nord's perspective will seem far too committed to fixed notions about women's experience or identity, and far too willing to overlook the more progressive aspects of women writer's entrance into scenes of urban observation. For every case—not just these first two—Nord's story about women as urban observers is a story of clear failure, rather than the story she promises initially: the story of a gradual transformation of social discourses from within. It will surely be debated whether these writers negotiated their public and private roles more creatively, complexly, and successfully than the problematics of urban observation, when studied in isolation, would seem to allow.

The third section of Nord's book extends her gloomy readings of female observers into the 1880s and 90s. Looking at a range of female novelists, social investigators, and political activists, Nord argues that these women writers managed their contradictory feelings about public exposure through a range of unsatisfying strategies: by taking up "masculine" stances or disguises; by displacing "female experience" into a genderless politics; by refusing to identify themselves primarily through their gender, choosing to define themselves in terms of religion, politics, or vocation instead; and by problematically identifying with working-class motherhood at the expense of their own feminist professionalism. Those who find this analysis too narrow may question Nord's choice of writers (in particular, why are Webb, Levy, and Harkness chosen to represent women writers of the 1880s?), or her general emphasis on the self-contradictions of female public authority rather

than on the creativity of women writers' responses to these tensions. At the same time, the professional compromises that haunted women writers are convincingly documented, and Nord's analysis of the choice of subject matter and the writing strategies women writers adopted is extremely useful, no matter how one might wish to complicate her conclusions.

Evelyn Ender's study makes much louder theoretical claims than Nord's book, but its goals are ultimately much narrower. Part of the problem is the fluidity of Ender's argument itself. Ender claims to be following a phenomenological model, absolving herself of the need to anchor her basic claims and conceptual tools. She appeals to the example of Octave Mannoni: "It is a matter of presenting examples, but without relying on a chronological order or applying principles, but in such a way that these cases, so to speak, begin to interpret one another" (3). Therefore, she proposes that the essential concepts that ground her study—consciousness, gender, sexual identity—can only be developed "incrementally, in their various 'phenomenological' apparitions," and that "their full meaning unfolds across the different chapters of this book" (4). This methodological strategy places enormous demands on the reader to integrate the various strands of Ender's inquiry, and one cannot help but wonder if the strategy is meant to conceal the pastiche of motivations underlying the work—the book seems, for example, to veer between a Derridean approach to the rhetoric of hysteria and a fairly simplistic feminist analysis—as well as the shopworn nature of some of the discrete claims Ender presents with much fanfare. At the very least, it obscures the motivations behind Ender's various shifts in critical focus, and the linkages she seeks to make between various writers.

Ender's study actually operates on some very familiar and sometimes problematic theoretical terrain. The first of these problems has to do with her choice of objects of study. Ender claims that gender is a literary construct as much as a political, social, or economic discourse—which is not at all a controversial proposition; and that, as a result, one can discover its workings better in literary texts than anywhere else—which is highly debatable. Ender's book is exclusively centered on literary texts, and on canonical texts at that. Though it is presented as a study of a number of novelists, it is basically a treatise on Henry James and George Sand, with a chapter on *Daniel Deronda* added at the end, and a not very informative or well-integrated overview of nineteenth-century medical discourse as a preface. This narrowness of focus is not sufficiently rationalized, and it makes the book's claims seem much more tenuous than they might have otherwise. Somewhat naively, Ender claims that her authors have been chosen because they express "the spirit of the age" (12).

Beyond that, Ender's general claims about hysteria itself are not particularly new or surprising. She tells us that debates on hysteria dramatized basic conceptions of gender and sexual difference; that such debates betray both cultural imperatives and private fantasies; that the encounter between the hysteric and the interpreter was a platform for questioning sexual identity and consciousness; that investigations of hysteria produced repressive constructions of gender difference, revolving around the denial of sexual knowledge associated with the feminine; that what is finally at stake, in the analysis of hysteria, are questions about the relation between mind and body

as these questions are imbricated in the nature and the "desire" of language itself. Ender marshals her material well, but unnecessarily, to confirm these familiar arguments. Even her more idiosyncratic claims have been made in one way or another by others. Though her self-consciousness about her own role as an interpreter, and the way that places her on the "masculine" side of the analyst, is evocatively formulated, for example, such self-consciousness is not unfamiliar in psychoanalytic criticism; and her concluding remarks on hysteria—that the confrontation between analyst and hysteric revolves around a battle over sexual difference in which the analyst desires the "truth" of sexual difference while the hysteric is in passionate denial of such a difference—is not really new. Ender's book ends up on the more celebratory side of hysteria studies—she sees the hysteric as literalizing a challenge to norms of sexual difference, as Ender validates Sand's "lived" writings about sexuality over the analytical critiques of James. But it does not stake out any particularly original grounds for this position.

The strength of Ender's book does not lie in her conclusions, which move fluidly over the relations between sexual difference, interiority, and hysteria. Rather, the striking parts of her book are the interpretive readings themselves. She is instructive about the transformation of medical discourse into literary discourse in the work of Flaubert, for instance. She does a wonderful job, throughout the book, of dissecting James's critique of Sand, showing how James deploys covert strategies for rebuking Sand's ability to link writing and sexual knowledge, as well as how James uses reticence and modesty as a means of defining sexual difference in oppressive terms. She shows brilliantly how James's response to Sand, and his own methods of erotic representation, enact the very approach to and avoidance of sexual knowledge that define nineteenth-century conceptions of hysteria, and how the tensions of veiled knowledge he generates are crucial to nineteenth-century constructions of interiority. She is terrific on James's casuistry with feminist positions on Sand. And she has interesting things to say about Dora, even at this late date, not on the level of the gendered plot of knowledge in the Dora case, but on such particular features as the hysteric's oscillation between activity and passivity, as figured in Freud's case study. She does a stunning reading of Sand's *Lélia*, finding a scene of epistemological confrontation within what appears simply to be an erotic encounter between two women, and she does a splendid reading of *Valentine*, as a fable of the undoing of proper gender attributions. Her analysis of Gwendolen Harleth, in *Daniel Deronda*, is a fascinating and original reading, as it teases out of Gwendolen a rhetoric and poetics of hysteria that is organized around notions of displacement, condensation, the phantasmatic, dissociation, and signification.

Against the vast body of work we now have on nineteenth-century female pathologies, Ender's book will certainly be praised for its interpretive dexterity and brilliance; but Nord's is the likelier of the two to be debated in a sustained way among those looking to define the ideology of women's cultural positioning.

Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930, by Carolyn Steedman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995. Pp. vii–254. \$29.95.

Had I given this review a title, it might have read “An (Inner) Child is Being Beaten” as a gesture to the conceptual, historical dimensions of Carolyn Steedman’s intriguing book. *Strange Dislocations* seeks to narrate how a twentieth-century, Western understanding of psychological interiority emerged from and remained indebted to the constitution of “childhood” during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Using the figurative permutations of the “strange, deformed and piercingly beautiful child-acrobat of Italian origins” (ix)—Goethe’s Mignon—in order to body forth this historical production of “a visceral sense of insideness, of an interiorised selfhood” (xi), Steedman claims that the fortunes of what some might consider merely a literary phenomenon, the “fictional” Mignon, produces or, more strongly, is, in fact, an historical event.

Such a claim is bound to give a shake to the beehive of disciplinary dissent that has been angrily buzzing for some time now over methodological and theoretical questions that might be briefly, and perhaps too simply, summed up as, “Isn’t history a form of narrative?” Within the beehive and against the backdrop of the buzz, Steedman’s book maintains a methodological distinction between history and narrative fiction while concomitantly refusing the logic of that distinction; that is, rather than insisting on the hard realities of the former in opposition to the airy fantasies of the latter, she walks what has become an increasingly tense theoretical—and often tacitly gendered—tightrope between the two. This, I might add, is an apt feat given that one of the objects of her study are the “strange bodily dislocations” of nineteenth-century Italian child-acrobats as represented by an “early action photograph” from the 1860s of a child who first performed as the boy, El Nino Farini and later as a girl, Mlle Lulu (vii).

Balancing, then, between implicit objections from both historians and literary critics, Steedman traverses the late eighteenth to the mid twentieth century examining various forms of cultural production, including evolutionary theory and physiology, in order to demonstrate the close methodological ties such increasingly divergent practices once had, historically. These ties, she writes, served to mark and also delimit the language of the emerging discipline of psychoanalysis, which in turn produced the idea of psychic “interiority” as a secular means to come to terms with loss. As a result, “the vast historicized world was turned inside, so that history itself might be dehistoricized, removed from the time that allowed growth and decay, so that they might be overcome, in the lost and—crucially—timeless place within” (95).

At the same time, Steedman’s account functions as a philosophical comment upon the undertaking called “history.” Thus, for Steedman, the discipline is most aptly represented by what she calls the “particularly delicious,” melodramatic pleasures of the historian who desires to rescue the lost “barely sensible burden of the past” (2). Steedman’s goal is to show that such a melodramatic desire is a real event, “that figurative existence is a form of historical existence” (172).

Crisply written in a lively, engaging yet serious, scholarly voice, *Strange Dislocations* is a remarkably absorbing account of an "object" that still exerts cultural fascination: the phantasmatic, androgynous child-figure, as presented in Mignon, continues to haunt contemporaneous depictions of, if not contemporaneous policies about, childhood. Certainly the repeated refrain that "children are our future," if banal, retains potentially volatile political force, as discussions of abuse, abortion and adoption policies rage on.

In fact, Steedman candidly asserts that her book took part of its inspiration from her own "desire to understand modern uses of childhood, especially those attitudes of projection on to and identification and empathy with children that are a fairly recent historical development in Western societies" (x). This desire eventually culminates in critique when she questions any attempt in the 1990s to read Mignon's story as one of sexual abuse. According to Steedman, although such a reading is historically inevitable, not only because "in the text a child is beaten before our very eyes" but also because Mignon's evasions "lead the modern reader unswervingly to the charge of child sexual abuse," it is also "ahistorical" and "clearly wrong" (165). Extending this logic to James R. Kincaid's *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (1992), she also maintains that this psychoanalytic and cultural exploration of the eroticized child is both "illuminating" and "irresponsible as well as illogical" (166). That is, although Kincaid's "placing of paedophilia on a continuum with the massive psychical and affective investment that is made in children" (166) diagnoses a crucial aspect of cultural history in the West, his work loses sight of its own logic, not only by adducing "real" evidence in an argument predicated upon undermining the status of the real, but also by proposing solutions—waiving the legal prohibition on adult-child sexual relations—without taking into account the "weight of evidence taken from those who experienced such relationships as children, which suggests that it hurts, either physically or psychically" (167).

It was from a consideration of Steedman's undoubtedly persuasive and yet logically confused critique of Kincaid that my imaginary title, "An (Inner) Child is Being Beaten," arose. As a gesture of admiration, it is meant to indicate both the unusual collision and conceptual collusion of "psychoanalysis" and "history" that Steedman enacts; at the same time, it is a gesture of critique inasmuch as it is meant to mark an unacknowledged problem in this study with how Steedman understands the real—the real of history, the real of pain or loss, the real of evidence. In short, although this study engages psychoanalysis by providing a narrative as to how interiority might have become the "inner child," it is strangely deaf to Freud's work in language and phantasy.

First, insofar as my imaginary title so evidently performs a "strange dislocation," as a deliberate mis-shaping of standard English grammar, it is meant to question Steedman's underlying assumption that some dislocations are not strange. Dislocation signifies disorder, disarray, a mess. How is a dislocation, then, not "strange?" And why is a redundancy, "strange dislocation," an appropriate description for Mignon? Has translation dislocated meaning? Oddly, then, while Steedman claims a vital interest in showing how textual representations (photography, theatre, songs, books, word-of-mouth) are events, she does not investigate the material production of that

"event"—or as Steedman says, she writes on the assumption that understanding language historically means paying attention to what people do with language and texts . . . rather than paying attention to what language does with people (xi).

But doesn't this assumption reinstate the opposition this book contests as it privileges history over language? For example, when Steedman claims that a literary analysis such as Kincaid's is "particularly easy" to write because "the commentator is released from the obligation to find evidence for happenings and events, and is only obliged to pursue the desires, opinions and observations of those who 'wrote' childhood" (97), she not only makes history the more difficult, more acute obligation than linguistic analysis, but she also loses sight of her own logic, given that the project claims to pay attention to what people—those who "'wrote' childhood" one would presume—do with language.

Steedman's inattention to linguistic effects is related to another conceptual confusion that I have tried to "zip" into my imaginary title. For while she consistently refuses the imperative to locate "real" social relations, especially in her recognition that it is the historian's fantasy of a recoverable lost past that drives the project of history when she critiques Kincaid (and Freud's work on fantasy, which includes "A Child Is Being Beaten," is vastly implicated here), it is precisely because he has, in her estimation, disregarded the real, socio-historical dynamics of power in his own time and has produced something too easy. Would this be a fantasy? If so, then why, exactly, is Kincaid's fantasy of the desirable and desiring child more irresponsible than the historian's melodramatic fantasy that he or she (as the hero) can rescue the lost and helpless past (as the maiden)? Whose delicious pleasure is the least irresponsible? Positioning her work in opposition to Kincaid's, Steedman writes that his topic—the relationship between desire and social being—is important, but only if done "positively," by which she means historically:

Yet the historical dilemma—what makes the topic worthy of historical inquiry—is that children were both the repositories of adults' desires (or a text, to be "written" and "rewritten," to use a newer language), and social beings, who lived in social worlds and networks of social and economic relationships, as well as in the adult imagination. If it is this dual existence that makes childhood a problem worthy of historical attention, then the historiographical difficulties attendant on recovering evidence about childhood need to be indicated, if not adumbrated, once again.

However, it is possible to proceed more positively, and to use these complexities—the muddled relationship between desire and social being—as a means of historical inquiry. (97)

And so, despite the promise that *Strange Dislocations* makes to treat text as historical event, in this text historical event always precedes text as event, so that history is the (real and difficult, or hard) referent to which the (easy, irresponsible and fantastic) text must always refer. Thus it is not surprising that this fine but contradictory text finds itself compelled to enact a

"compulsive" archival search for an "actual" British Mignon, "in one of the entries off Brook Hill, behind Brown's Court and Foy's Court, in one of Clerkenwell's enumerated dwelling places . . . some time between December 1850 and the day the enumerator called, three months later" (172), no matter how aware the text is that this desire is a fantasy.

University of Florida

Stephanie A. Smith

Discrepant Dislocations: Feminism, Theory, and Postcolonial Histories by Mary E. John. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. Pp. 198. \$18.00 paper. \$45.00 cloth.

The subtitle of John's book clearly spells out the main project of *Discrepant Dislocations*—the historicization of theory, especially feminist theory, from a postcolonial perspective. According to John, interrogating the spatio-temporal specificities of (western) theory is a necessary pre-condition for the formulation of a valid international feminism that is not based on a facile universalism. Such questioning of dominant western theoretical models from a postcolonial feminist perspective is not new in itself. Works like *This Bridge Called My Back* (edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 1981) and *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (edited by Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, 1991) represent a significant tradition of oppositional critique and alternative theoretical formulations which have shaped the contours of postcolonial feminisms. John's work belongs to this tradition of postcolonial criticism. Her chief contribution lies in making the postcolonial feminist intellectual as much a part of her investigation as her western counterpart. By doing so, John successfully avoids constructing a new center of meaning, and instead, emphasizes the necessity of recognizing the partial and composite structure of all (western as well as postcolonial) theoretical formulations.

John stages the encounter between the postcolonial feminist intellectual and the west in anthropological terms. The use of anthropology as a metaphor for this relationship is one of the most enabling theoretical moves in the text. By adopting the framework of an academic discipline entrenched in the history of western imperialism, John not only situates her critical endeavor firmly within an institutional structure, but also foregrounds the continuing nexus of power/knowledge that dominates this setting. According to John, western epistemological domination is not restricted to the geographical west but extends to "third world" spaces, like India, where postcolonial feminist intellectuals fashion themselves under the sign of westernization. John emphasizes this pervasive domination of the west to highlight the imbrication of Indian feminists like herself within the institutional power structure that her book attempts to deconstruct. Aided by their westernization in making their move to the geographical west, Indian feminists cannot claim an external "objective" position from which to critique western theory. Their perspective is necessarily "partial." Thus, by using the metaphor of anthropology for the domination of the west and placing herself under its shadow,

John implicitly acknowledges the "partial" nature of her own critical work, which makes *Discrepant Dislocations* a practical illustration of the partial and composite theoretical model that it constructs.

John structures her book around three possible subject positions for the postcolonial feminist intellectual in relation to the west. She constructs these subject positions as scenarios, "to make room for their staged, almost theatrical qualities and to deemphasize their constructedness around [her] own experiences" (11). This attempt to distance her theoretical investigations appears a little dubious, especially in light of John's emphasis on the historical specificities of theoretical formulations. This apparent contradiction, however, may be explained by the fact that the three scenarios constructed by John are coded in the language of anthropology. While this consistent use of a single metaphor provides theoretical and structural coherence to the book, it also subjects the text to the burden of anthropology's ideological baggage evident in its implicit association of postcolonial spaces with experiential raw material which is made comprehensible through the application of western theoretical models. In this context, John's insertion of a sense of dislocation between her theoretical "scenarios" and her own "experiences" may be read as an attempt to dissociate her project from the disabling binary opposition implicit in the discipline of anthropology. This strategic disclaimer reveals John's awareness of the dangers of appropriating western theoretical constructs in aid of postcolonial opposition to western domination. However, in spite of this awareness, John persists in using the metaphor of anthropology, not merely as a symbolic gesture indicating the all-pervasive realities of western power, but as a means to illustrate the effective strategies of manipulation available to overdetermined postcolonial subjects for deconstructing the framework of western domination on its own grounds. Though such precarious theoretical negotiations incur the danger of appearing self-contradictory, as in the case noted above, John's commitment to this task makes *Discrepant Dislocations* a daring work of postcolonial theory.

John's first scenario for the encounter between the postcolonial feminist intellectual and the west is constructed under the sign of "Immigrant." Within the dominant discourse of the west, the "immigrant" is defined in terms of the politics of arrival whereby the physical entry into the western space becomes a marker for the subject's entry into "modernization, progress, and secularism" (10). In the specific context of the academy, the postcolonial intellectuals' entry into western institutions is marked by their initiation into the universalizing discourse of "Theory." According to John, the erasure of difference that is implicit in such constructions of the immigrant can be counteracted by becoming a resisting immigrant; in academic terms this transformation would require a refusal to disappear into the melting pot of theory by deconstructing theory's universalizing claims and recognizing its partial and composite structure. Such a reading of theory is enabled by a careful consideration of the "data-ladenness" of theory, which foregrounds its historical specificities and deconstructs its authority as an abstract philosophical construct. According to John, this "data-ladenness" can be highlighted by tracing the travels of theory—"we are in a much better position to explore the partial and composite structures of theories when their inability to travel easily is most obvious" (49). John develops these theoretical formu-

lations concerning traveling theory through brilliant close readings of Spivak and Freud, which form one of the most intellectually stimulating as well as politically enabling contributions of this book to postcolonial studies.

The second scenario constructed by John is that of "Anthropology in Reverse" which focuses on the role of the postcolonial feminist intellectual at the point of return from the west. Through this empowering appropriation of the anthropological gaze, John investigates the contours of U.S. feminism by tracing the complex histories of its analytical categories—gender, class, and race. By focusing on the contradictions and diversity characteristic of U.S. feminism, John avoids re-enacting the homogenizing practices of dominant western anthropology and provides an historically nuanced analysis of the contemporary field of U.S. feminism. In a short forty-page study there are necessarily glaring omissions, and many readers may question John's unexplained choice of feminist theorists for detailed analysis. However, personal preferences apart, John does succeed in presenting a concise overview of the complex field of U.S. feminism. At the same time, she also provides an incisive critique of its problems by highlighting the ghettoization of the issues of race and class as the special province of "women of color." John rightly points to this tendency in U.S. feminism as an indication of the continued refusal of white middle-class feminists to examine their own "sanctioned ignorances." Interestingly, the one category missing from John's analysis is that of sexuality. Though she mentions it at the beginning of the chapter, she fails to provide even a cursory description of the major debates in this embattled category. Considering John's self-characterization as "upper middle class, heterosexual woman, Indian national" (emphasis added 6), this omission marks a significant failure of the text to fulfill its own theoretical agenda.

In the fourth and final chapter, John appropriates the anthropological category of "Native Informant" to investigate the "places of departure" which constantly haunt the postcolonial intellectual in the west. In a brilliant move of theoretical reversal, John transforms the exoticizing insistence of the west that the postcolonial feminist constantly act as a trope of difference into an occasion for the latter to examine her places of difference and thus become an active agent of interrogation rather than a passive source of information. In *Discrepant Dislocations*, John enacts this role by returning to her place of departure, India, and exploring the different trajectories of Indian feminism in the post-independence period. According to John, this period of Indian feminist history can be divided into two distinct phases. While the first phase used the language of socialist feminism to develop a sense of community between the "self" (dominant urban middle class feminists) and the "other" (poor rural women), the second phase initiated an interrogation of the unexamined histories of middle class women to explain the emergence of a new "feminist subject" constructed by the rhetoric of Hindu fundamentalism. John's ability to provide well-defined coherent theoretical models for vast and complex fields of inquiry is clearly evident in this chapter. However, unlike the previous chapters where schematic overviews of theoretical fields are combined with incisive critiques of their analytical categories, this chapter does not interrogate the theoretical constructs of post-independence Indian feminism. What specific socio-historical forces, for example, necessitated the construction of a "split subject" during its first phase? Why is the

"feminist subject" of Hindu fundamentalism seen by other Indian feminists more as a creation of bourgeois feminism than any fundamentalist ideology? John implicitly raises these questions by placing different Indian feminists in conversation with each other. Her refusal, however, to foreground her own critical perspective reveals the political difficulties faced even by a resisting native informant while speaking to, and within the boundaries of, western intellectual domination.

John's awareness of her western audience is evident in her decision to emphasize the issues of nation and nationalism in her analysis of Indian feminism since these are conspicuous by their absence from the dominant fields of western theory. By foregrounding the inextricable connections between the politics of nation and the history of Indian feminism, John questions the premature dismissal of nationalism as a category of analysis from western intellectual territory. John thus points towards the possibility of destabilizing western theoretical domination by an insertion of theoretical models developed in "other" spaces. Unfortunately John does not develop this concept of theory traveling from the "third world" to the west; her constant emphasis on the "realities of western dominance," while necessary to counteract unexamined celebrations of difference, overwhelms her work and prevents it from exploiting its full potential as an oppositional text within the space of western domination.

The four chapters of *Discrepant Dislocations* are perhaps best read as separate essays rather than interconnected parts of a single-focus work. Though John attempts to create a sense of coherence by using the metaphor of anthropology as a theoretical and structural framework, this overarching model is unable to encompass the different foci of the individual chapters. This lack of unity, however does not detract from the critical significance of the detailed analyses of different theoretical fields provided by each essay. Furthermore, the essays on U.S. and Indian feminism do form a valuable unit since they present the reader with an important comparative study that indicates possible points of alliance for the construction of a viable international feminism. The availability of these four essays of oppositional theory within the confines of a single book therefore makes *Discrepant Dislocations* a valuable addition to the bookshelf of every scholar in the fields of feminist and post-colonial theory as well as cultural studies.

Wayne State University

Suchitra Mathur

Disciplines of Virtue: Girl's Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries by Lynne Vallone. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. x + 230. \$25.00.

In this theoretically astute addition to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural studies, Lynne Vallone explores an area often neglected by literary scholars—youth studies. Vallone covers a wide range of issues, "institutional, literary, instructive, legal, and domestic" (157), pertaining to the social construction of girlhood in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and America. Although such a wide range is a strength of Vallone's

book, it is also a weakness. Elegantly woven together by thematic interests, the book nevertheless shifts from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English texts and practices aimed at young women to late nineteenth-century American children's literature and culture in a somewhat jarring manner. Despite this difficult leap from England to America, Vallone is largely successful in negotiating the links between social, legal and literary practices, and the value of this book undoubtedly lies in Vallone's illuminating examinations of children's and girls' literary fare.

Vallone's writing is superbly crafted and her argument is clearly mapped out from beginning to end. Chapter 1, "The Pleasure of the Act: Charity, Penitence, and Narrative," examines the role of charity in eighteenth-century English didactic literature for girls and in the historical institution of the home for penitent prostitutes. Vallone argues that the "bad girl" is a necessary foil to the construction of the "good" or virtuous girl; it is through the charity of the virtuous girl that the fallen girl may become penitent, thereby elevating both girls. One of Vallone's most compelling conclusions in this chapter is that the "assimilation and reflection of the middle-class ideal of feminine behavior (selflessness being an important part of that ideal), increased a girl's value in an increasingly capitalistic market" (24). Female behavior as currency thus becomes one focus of Vallone's study.

Throughout the book, Vallone also emphasizes the ways in which ideologies are mapped onto the female body. Chapter 2, "'The Matter of Letters': Conduct, Anatomy, and *Pamela*," considers the "surveillance" of the female body and female subjectivity through conduct literature that both constructs and enforces appropriate behavior for girls. Vallone begins with a useful analysis of Hannah Woolley's conduct manual, *The Gentlewoman's Companion*, concentrating on how Woolley uses the language of anatomy to command and control the actions of the girl (gendered body). She then turns to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. It is a widely accepted tenet of *Pamela* criticism that the novel is Richardson's attempt to put conduct manual principles such as Hannah Woolley's into narrative form. Vallone takes this commonplace assertion and suggests that such an inscription subsequently reduces the girl, Pamela, to "the super-compressed 'P'— a letter, in letters" (35). She brilliantly connects this concept to the history of *Pamela*'s abridgment for children, first undertaken in 1756. Vallone concludes that Pamela, the girl character, is further "abridged" and distilled into "an automatically acceptable exemplar" when the text, *Pamela*, is "dissected (or amputated) for didactic reasons" into a child's version (37).

Vallone treads familiar "domestic" ground, if you will, in Chapters 3, "The Value of Virtue: Dowry, Marriage Settlements, and the Conduct Novel," and 4, "The Happiness of Virtue: Evangelicalism, Class, and Gender." Chapter 3 discusses the market value of a virtuous girl through a consideration of the legal practices of dowry and marriage settlements that segues into readings of fictionalized representations of marriage contracts in Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* and Frances Burney's *Evelina*. In these novels, Vallone concentrates on how the private girl, in this case the bride-to-be, experiences the difficulty of committing herself to her intended through the public act of signing the marriage articles; a difficulty she cannot verbalize and must therefore articulate through the signs of the body. This public/private drama

is played out again in Chapter 4, where Vallone discusses the plight of the "Christian girl" and how "home economics" necessarily demanded "private homes and public bodies" (69). Vallone argues that "[w]hile the private home functioned as a social and literary ideal, created in response to various social and political revolutions, the female body—the 'home' for future generations (and the site of economic exchange)—remained public and 'open' through the promotion of ideologies of conduct, religion, family and patriotic sentiment" (69). She specifically addresses the British Evangelical movement and literature by well-known authors such as Hannah More and Jane Austen as well as lesser-known works by Mary Brunton and Mary Martha Sherwood. Particularly valuable here is a sophisticated examination of how the ideals of feminine conduct and class conduct converge on the figure of the working-class girl, exemplified in the lower-class character of Betty Brown from Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* who learns to "behave properly in order to produce adequately" (74).

Chapters 5 and 6, "The Daughters of the Republic: Girls' Play in Nineteenth-Century American Juvenile Fiction" and "'The True Meaning of Dirt': Putting Good and Bad Girls in Their Place(s)," take readers across the Atlantic from England to America. Vallone negotiates this crossing and "[t]he tension between an American and British version of justice in play" through the example of a croquet game between Jo March and some British friends of Laurie's in *Little Women* (108). Here Jo represents the clever yet honest "republican daughter" and the British boy, Fred Vaughn, is exposed as a cheater. While this incident does have something to say about "fair play," I do not think it is an adequate bridge between continents and cultures. Indeed, the cohesion of Vallone's entire book relies on a concept, "virtue," that increasingly constrains eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminist scholarship. By focusing not only on dominant ideologies of domesticity, but also and extending the reach and scope of those ideologies across two countries and two centuries, Vallone's exhaustive research risks privileging, if not the "good" girl over the "bad," then at least the ongoing recuperation of stories and practices that uphold this monolithic image of virtuous, domestic woman/girlhood.

In her introduction, Vallone states her rationale for "the study of girls' culture and girls' reading" as it "is crucial to our understanding of femininity, women's history and literature, and ideologies of domesticity, conduct and class" (4). Vallone's very elastic use of the category "girl," a term that she never defines, is worth noting. She slides easily from what may be termed "adult literature" (Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Samuel Richardson) to "children's literature" (Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott). Without a sufficient explanation of these moves, readers are left to wonder what constitutes the category of "girls' literature"—fiction read by girls? fiction written for girls? fictions with girl heroines? Vallone briefly acknowledges this problem in her discussion of Jane Austen, "not generally considered a children's or a girls' author" (98). I do not mean to suggest that eighteenth-century novels were not read by or written for girls. What I question is the slippery use of the category "girl." Perhaps what Vallone's study ultimately suggests is that there was, in fact, a negligible ideological distinction between girls and women. In fact, when discussing Evangelical writers, Vallone notes that

"there is very little distinction made between child and marriageable woman" (72).

These issues of definition, however, do not detract from the overall worth of Vallone's literary analysis. Deftly executed and thoroughly readable, this book is a notable contribution to scholarship on gender, culture and the role of reading in constructing femininity.

Wayne State University

Jodi L. Wyett

Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England by Dennis Todd. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xvii + 339. \$17.95 (paper).

Dennis Todd's examination of the widely perceived dangers of the corporeal imagination in early eighteenth-century England and the anxieties about identity that they fueled, along with the poetic and satiric works they inspired, is one of the most impressive interdisciplinary studies of the period to appear in recent years, not to mention a sheer pleasure to read given its absorbing subject matter and lucid explication. Marshalling his formidable gifts as a literary critic, a cultural historian, and a historian of ideas, Todd here applies himself to solving the mystery of one of the period's most curious and seemingly inexplicable incidents, in which an illiterate cloth-worker's wife named Mary Toft putatively gave birth to seventeen rabbits: a claim which, although eventually exposed as a hoax, was given credence not only by large segments of the general public at the time (1726) but also by many leading medical authorities of the day.

When I say "solving the mystery" I am speaking more than figuratively: the book unfolds much like an engrossing suspense story, moving from a detailed description of the 'crime scene,' as it were—first Godalming, Surrey, where Toft reportedly gave birth to her first rabbit, and later Leicester Fields, where she was brought for closer surveillance by several eminent London-based doctors—to an investigation of the evidence based on contemporary records (journalistic, epistolary, and satirical accounts, essays on monstrosities, tracts on the maternal imagination, etc.), and then on to several interwoven lines of inquiry that yield first a series of intriguingly perplexing questions and later some richly suggestive answers. The latter allow us the satisfaction of seeing the various pieces of the puzzle coalesce into a coherent explanation even as we remain duly humbled by the awareness (encouraged by the book's presentation) that the mystery at its core—which is the enigma of personal identity itself—can never be definitively "solved."

To reduce a complex, finely nuanced argument to its simplest terms, Todd contends that the basis of Toft's hoax—i.e., the spectacle of a woman's giving birth to "monstrous" offspring—was something the majority of her contemporaries were likely to have entertained as at least a possibility given prevailing beliefs about the power of the female imagination and its ability to shape (or *misshape*) the fetus. While he doesn't entirely discount the self-interested motives that might have induced some physicians to support Toft's

claim, Todd stresses the fact that "the prenatal influence of the imagination was widely accepted among the medical men" (51) in order to show how the doctors could have been quite sincere in crediting Toft's testimony, especially since the story she told focused on her obsession with rabbits throughout her pregnancy. This belief regarding prenatal influences fed into deep-seated anxieties about the nature of human identity arising from fears that "the imagination embruted us deeply in our corporeality" and could cause "alien energies from below" to "well up and assimilate the self" (104). It was these underlying anxieties more than the specific circumstances of the case which accounted for the intensity of the responses to it and for the excesses of the language used to describe the hoax once it was revealed as such—language "more appropriate for warning about an imminent foreign invasion or the subversion of the commonwealth" (66). Todd points to widespread ambivalence and confusion on the part of the general public, arguing that in dealing with their reactions "we are often in [a] hazy psychological realm where distinctions between belief and disbelief are not clear-cut and where degrees of conviction are hard to measure" (42).

As this formulation suggests, Todd's idea of solving the mystery of the Toft affair has little to do with offering black-and-white answers to the questions it raises. Rather, his concern is with exploring the "uncertainties and vexations" (107), the psychic struggles between equally problematic alternatives, which fueled the crisis of personal identity that he sees underlying the incident. Todd elucidates this crisis with great but unpretentious erudition, using a wide range of contemporary sources in the process. A fair amount has been written over the past decade (e.g., by Christopher Fox in *Locke and the Scriblerians: Identity and Consciousness in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain*, and Felicity Nussbaum in *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*) about the destabilizing effect of Locke's and Hume's theories on traditional notions of identity. Todd extends these studies by also considering lesser-known thinkers such as James Blondel and Daniel Turner, whose opposing views about the power of the maternal imagination ignited an intense controversy over the relationship between mind and body only months after the denouement of the Toft scandal. Particularly illuminating is the analysis of the shifting grounds of Turner's argument, which reflected, in Todd's felicitous wording, "not a rigorous exfoliation of a cogent metaphysics but . . . the bob and wheel of a mind under the pressure of an anxiety" (116). This description epitomizes the unique strength of Todd's treatment of philosophical ideas: his perception of them not as a static set of abstract theories but as dynamic engagements on the part of contemporary thinkers with certain pressing issues of their day—as their means of contending with both the logical contradictions and the psychological stresses that these issues produced.

In the second half of the book Todd turns his attention to the impact of the Toft affair on contemporary literary works, directing particularly close scrutiny to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the *Dunciad*, with Hogarth's satiric representation of the affair, *Cunicularii*, or *The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation*, also receiving extended commentary. Todd repeatedly invokes the idea of monstrosity to show how these works variously address the same set of anxieties that Toft's reputed pregnancy pro-

voked. The discussion of the *Memoirs* focuses on the episode of Lindamira-Indamora—sisters, modelled on real-life twins exhibited in London, who are joined at their backs and share sexual and reproductive organs. Todd demonstrates how the episode undermined both mechanistic and metaphysical theories of man's nature, unsettling all clear-cut definitions of human identity by virtue of the fact that "[Lindamira-Indamora] is (they are!) a liminal creature, inhabiting the borders between categories, suggesting the possibility that the categories themselves are ambiguous, permeable" (133). The analysis here is incisive, although it might have been enhanced by including consideration of Pope's curious letter, ostensibly "To a Lady from her Brother," recounting his visit to a hermaphrodite in the company of a physician and a divine, each of whom comes up with a different opinion of the creature's "true" sex. (Tellingly, the Popeian persona concludes it to be neither male nor female but a combination of the two, bringing to mind the several allusions to androgyny in Pope's poetry.) This letter—along with others where Pope assumes a female role vis-à-vis his male correspondents—broadens the terms of the early eighteenth-century debate about personal identity, indicating that its anxiety-producing ambiguities extended to the specific question of sexual identity: a subject that is not explored here at all. This omission can certainly be justified given the subject's lack of direct relevance to the Toft affair *per se*. Nevertheless, in the absence of such gender considerations, the concept of identity at the heart of the book's analysis might strike some readers as overly generalized and disembodied despite the historical specificity and psychological nuance with which it is explored.

Turning to *Gulliver's Travels*, Todd interprets Swift's satire in general, and what he sees as "the dispersion of Gulliver's identity" (172) in particular, against the backdrop of popular diversions in London, especially monster shows like the ones regularly put on at Bartholomew Fair. These entertainments, featuring displays of giants, dwarfs, cannibals, wild hairy men, and animals trained to mimic human actions (etc.), reflected the public's fascination with creatures whose ambiguous status dramatically underscored the instability of the boundaries between man and beast, between what was normal and familiar and what was abnormal and alien. Todd presents a provocative argument for the ways in which Swift thematically and satirically exploits these popular diversions in order to "dramatiz[e] the shifts and scams we go through to avoid becoming conscious of the uncomfortable truths monsters have to tell us" (161). These truths, as they emerge from his analysis, relate to our dual recognition that Gulliver's final characterization of man as a "Lump of Deformity" is valid but also wrong in failing to take into account man's capacity for "shaping a specific human identity from the shapeless monstrosity of his variegated potential" (176). While this conclusion does not substantively differ from traditional interpretations of the *Travels* as a humanistic work revealing man's double nature as *animal rationis capax*, it assumes edifying new dimensions from the popular cultural context Todd brings to his reading of the satire. To be sure, there will be readers who take issue with Todd's treatment of Gulliver as a coherent, psychologically developed character seemingly capable of intricate thought processes; but Todd effectively anticipates such criticism by offering a well-reasoned defense of his approach, reminding us of the even greater problems attend-

ant upon viewing Gulliver as merely a series of changing satiric masks lacking even the illusion of an integrated personality.

My one serious reservation with this reading is that I don't believe it is possible to fully understand the problem of personal identity as it relates to Swift without taking into account the deep conflicts and anxieties surrounding his status as Anglo-Irishman: a status whose equivocality in many ways perfectly exemplifies—though in socio-political rather than epistemological terms—the unsettling ambiguities and blurred boundaries that Todd identifies with the crisis of identity during this period. By the same token, I don't think one can fully appreciate what monstrosity meant for Swift without considering how that concept functioned in certain racial and colonial contexts bearing directly upon representations of Irishness in the eighteenth century. Surely it is not coincidental that the Yahoos embody many of the prevailing stereotypes of the “savage Irish”—stereotypes that Swift often alludes to, and at times explicitly mocks, in his prose tracts, as when, in one of the *Drapier's Letters*, he ridicules Englishmen's credulity for believing the Irish are wild beasts capable of being captured and trained to eat out of their masters' hands. His occasional comparisons of the Irish to Hottentots and Africans highlights the kinds of associations surrounding the Irish in the popular mind—ones with inescapably “monstrous” overtones. Following along this same line of thought, one must also question the book's exclusive focus on the freak shows and related amusements in *London*. What about the popular diversions across the sea (with which Swift would have had the opportunity of becoming very familiar during the years of the *Travels*' composition)? How might the display of monsters in the Irish city have made a different impact on the spectators, or conveyed a different set of meanings to distinct segments of the audience, as a result of the colonial and racial (hence also cultural) politics operating there? Todd quotes at length from Swift's poem, “Mad Mullinix and Timothy,” to show the importance of popular entertainments—in this case puppet shows—for Swift's writings (152–53). What is not explained, though, is that this poem is set in Dublin (where it was originally published in a weekly journal—another form of ‘popular diversion’) and deals explicitly with that city's denizens, politics, and street amusements. It is thus fitting that when Mullinix (a half-crazed Dublin beggar) declares, “*The World consists of Puppet-shows,*” he goes on to make the metaphor more immediate and accessible to his auditor by pointing to “this Booth, which we call *Dublin*.” Consideration of Swift's Irish context would have added a crucial layer of historical and cultural specificity to a study that in all other respects admirably demonstrates its high regard for both.

The final two chapters of *Imagining Monsters*, among the strongest in the book, offer fascinating commentary on Pope as both man and writer. The first presents a close reading of the *Dunciad* through the lens of the Mary Toft affair, which helps contextualize “Pope's fear that personal identity can be destroyed by the imagination” (210), and which reveals “how thoroughly Pope associated th[e] double descent into disorder and body with monstrous birth” (199). As with other works discussed, Todd usefully situates the *Dunciad* within the tradition of anti-Enthusiastic satire, enriching his analysis with trenchant observations about Pope's own experience with the frightening consequences of the Enthusiastic imagination. And here again, a reading

that accords with traditional interpretations in its basic outlines yields new and surprising insights through its invocation of hitherto overlooked contexts for the work. Todd concludes his study with some brilliant reflections on Pope's personal and artistic struggles to transform his own "monstrosity"—his severe physical deformities resulting from spinal tuberculosis—into confirmation of his virtue and moralizing song—into arguments for his possession of "heart" and "character" in spite of contemporary stereotypes that would deny such attributes to deformed beings. Looking closely at a mid-eighteenth-century essay on deformity, whose author, William Hay, suffered from physical disabilities similar to Pope's, Todd compellingly demonstrates the extent to which popular perceptions of bodily 'monstrosity' affected the psyche and behavior of the deformed, in Pope's case providing the impetus to reshape his identity and poetic career in an effort to distance himself from the arguably monstrous creations of his own imagination. As with Helen Deutsch's fine study, *Resemblance and Disgrace: Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture* (which appeared some months after Todd's), *Imagining Monsters* offers us provocative new ways of understanding the literary implications of what Pope termed "this long Disease, my Life." To some readers, Todd's exposition may seem a bit too uncritically accepting of Pope's own vindications of himself, too unconcerned with the more cynically manipulative aspects (as well as politically partisan and economic motives) of Pope's dramatizations and reinventions of self. Even these readers, however, are likely to be impressed by a discussion so edifying in the connections it makes between art and life, mind and body, and by reflections so genuinely moving in their evocation of the personal pain that went into the creation of the public persona.

In the final analysis, whatever disagreements one might have with particular aspects of its argument, *Imagining Monsters* has an integrity such that one would not want to change a single word of it. As a critical text, the book hovers at the intersection of a number of fields very much *au courant* in the academy today: feminist, cultural, and new historicist studies, medical and social constructions of the body, etc. Yet it refrains from making its connections to these fields explicit and assiduously avoids both the theoretic apparatus and the specialized idiom increasingly characteristic of such studies, presenting instead a form of intellectual inquiry which unequivocally belies current obituaries for traditional humanistic criticism. At the same time, the book has nothing in common with the pompous and petulant studies of late which imply that their self-conscious eschewal of contemporary critical perspectives is tantamount to saving Western civilization (or at least 'pure' scholarly endeavor) from theory-wielding hordes of invaders. Blithely unconcerned with the methodological skirmishes and turf wars being waged these days in academic circles, Todd quietly and deftly goes about his business without polemical (or self-promotional) fanfare. The result is an elegantly written study filled with material rich enough to be mined for years, both by critics interested in exploring its tantalizing theoretical implications and by those desirous of pursuing more traditional lines of literary or cultural history.

Reading North by South: On Latin American Literature, Culture, and Politics by Neil Larsen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. Pp. xi + 234. \$18.95 paper.

Reading North by South starts from the important question about the position of a North American critic, however knowledgeable and sympathetic, who reads the literature of Latin America and the Caribbean: what strategies will ensure that their encounter does not result in another imposition of the cultural politics of the more on the less powerful cultural entity? How make sure that after that imposition has occurred, the less powerful is not simply declared to have had no voice from the beginning? How, to pose the question in a more timely manner, should one confront the "current crisis of self-authorization," evidenced, as Larsen notes, in Doris Sommers's positing of North American readerly incompetence before the South (or Latin) American text? (15) The proposed answer lies in a combination of whatever the current political synonym is for the marginally political virtue of tact, and the clear and unequivocal statement of the critic's ideological position: "an uncompromising rejection of modernism as an aesthetic and a concomitant advocacy of realism," which in turn lead to the central subjects of discussion in the book: "what are the constituents of, and the historical conditions of possibility for, realism in an imperialized world, especially on its southern and Latin American flanks?" (19) The discussion takes place in a collection of essays that began as "lectures or conference papers, articles or reviews" (xi), grouped under the headings of "Occupation Texts," "*Sui Generis*," "Uncivil Society," "Recolonization," "Culture and Nation," "Postmodernity," and "Cultural Studies." The articles show the interrelations among those headings, and in the aggregate constitute a running argument about—mostly against—the tenets of post-modernism, post-colonial studies and cultural studies.

Larsen's position is that of a faithful Marxist (uneasy even about criticism against Stalin), solidly conversant with the classic texts and arguments, as well as with their modern and post-modern critiques, at serious odds with a woollier—say Althusserian—"Leftism" of identity politics. In the "Introduction" Larsen identifies the main points around and against which he builds his argument: the literature of "testimonio" becomes a test case (and by thinking of the other chapters in a chronological arrangement the reader can follow the development of Larsen's thought on the subject). He is then ready to point out the logical and ideological weaknesses of the current sentimental valuation of "testimonio" literature that considers it has finally found a direct expression of "reality" in productions from naive subjects who can, *pace* Spivak, "speak," but are able to bypass the mediation of language (particularly written language). For Larsen, valuing a utopic ideal of unmediated communication over the mediations of representation (a term that in his analyses acquires great interpretive and ethical force) is a political, rather than, as touted, an aesthetic, or ethical retreat (16). For reasons entirely different from—at times diametrically opposed to—those of deconstructionists, Larsen doubts the possibility of immediacy and quickly locates the point at which the discourse of "testimonios" and of the critics who champion them is infiltrated by ideology or adjusts itself to a public that must be addressed in ideologically charged and suspect terms. His own

biases lie, as he often and clearly states, in the privileging of a "realist" literature, in the Lukácsian sense, opposed not only to "naturalism," defined as its false-consciousness shadow, but also to modernism, which, in its willed detachment from, even hostility to, the overtly political, simply ends up playing into the hands of cold war capitalism and anti-communist imperialism. For Larsen, literature has a social and political obligation, and no work can claim high literary quality unless it is also engaged in clarifying and, if possible, combating social, political, cultural and economic oppression.

In effect, the North of the book's title must be particularly careful in reading the South lest it participate in, or perpetuate such oppression; that it is done unknowingly is precisely the excuse Larsen will not accept. As he begins his discussion of "the crisis of self-authorization" and while cautioning against the uncritical imposition of extraneous and unexamined criteria, derived from what in shorthand would be called Eurocentric assumptions, as well as against the relinquishment of criticism for fear of such impositions, he also denies the necessity of such a crisis; it is caused, according to Larsen, by an uncritical acceptance of the post-modern or post-structuralist insistence on the constructed nature of all reality, that is, of its refusal to consider the concreteness of a social and economic reality on which culture and its manifestations, like literature, are based. In relation to this form of concreteness Larsen worries less about whether a concept is Eurocentric or patriarchal than about whether it is likely to help achieve a classless society; though the critique of Eurocentrism and patriarchy can uncover injustice not otherwise so readily apparent—Larsen includes women, specifically, among those who are subject to oppression—and Left orthodoxy can be invoked to justify practices contrary to the achievement of justice in a classless society, as might have been the case among regimes that falsely claimed to be socialist, still, the view from the classically defined Left has the force to authorize the critic. In the event, it allows Larsen to mount extremely subtle and perceptive analyses of some currently fashionable stances toward "peripheral" societies, at the same time sympathetic to their impulse toward solidarity with the suffering, and impatient with the sentimentality that in the end makes them dismiss reason, science, and progress, and doubt the value of the achievement by the "peripheries" of the advantages they themselves enjoy.

Throughout, the essays are concerned both with literature and politics, intent on preserving the connection throughout any analysis of one of its terms. In his discussion of why teach "revolutionary" texts from the Caribbean (preceded, logically, by one about who can decide on whether a text is revolutionary [25]) Larsen is very clear about the fact that statements about how modern "revolutions" take place against the background of a world marketplace in which "immensely powerful capitalist" states "struggle for hegemonic control . . . [while] engaged in something different from nation-formation regardless of which class finally acts and benefits" are, "politically," "commonplace;" the real question is what all of it means for literature (27). Conversely, analyzing the positions that, as he sees it, result in the distortion by Jameson, Spivak, Kipnis, Yúdice and others, of "reality into a new irrationalist and spontaneist myth" informed by the hope for an alterity that will make post-modernity redemptive, Larsen lauds the ethics of the attempt, but refuses to accept its politics. He admits—which will probably

not make his stance more acceptable to those he has just criticized—that their attempts derive from a crisis in Marxism itself. “The very insistence on a politics of spontaneism and myth, on the tacit abandonment of conscious and scientific revolutionary strategy and organization is,” says Larsen, “the derivative effect of developments within Marxism itself, of what amounts to the *conscious political* decision to give up the principle of revolution as a scientifically grounded activity, as a praxis with a rational foundation” (177, 180). Such a politics is another way of making sure that whatever those on the periphery say “always already means only one thing: [that they are] the colonized” (30); what is lost is why *they* need literature, which is to give their revolution “the power to interpret itself” (38). To a large extent, then, as Larsen argues in “On Colonial ‘Discourse,’” the refusal to consider the importance of an aesthetic dimension in the cultural productions of the “colonized,” though it can for a moment be liberating, is also likely, in the end, to confirm “the traditional colonizing perspective, in effect granting to ‘Eurocentrism’ the exclusive right to make aesthetic judgments . . .” (105).

That said, the essays, though always clear and forceful in expression, are not always even in scope: though the talks on how to put together a syllabus for teaching Caribbean literature are based on principles lucidly exposed and consistent with those of the rest of the book, the details are not elaborated, so that one is not clear how they will be applied. In a thinker as subtle as Larsen, and as attuned to the nuances of literatures different from those of Europe and the United States, the conclusions and the paths taken toward them are not always obvious; one misses the pleasure of discovery. Other, more elaborate articles like that on the Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado and the Spanish-American “boom” writers reorganize and reveal knowledge in highly useful and satisfying ways.

The different sections of the book tackle different questions about writing on Latin America, both from the point of view of North America and Europe and from that of Latin American writers engaging with the cultural and economic relation of power between their own and the positions of outsiders; most take a particular work—Doris Sommer’s *Foundational Fictions*, for example—as starting points for the discussion of central problems of post-colonial, post-modern, post-structuralist criticism, for which Latin American literature and criticism reveal themselves as excellent testing grounds: former-British-empire-centered post-colonial criticism tends to ignore Latin America (both in the sense of knowing little about it and in the often causally connected sense of considering it irrelevant), though it has a fairly long history of argument about precisely the questions raised in that criticism. With impeccable logic and keen insight, Larsen goes to the core of the arguments; his questions are always about the axioms of the analyses proposed. They often reveal that, taken to their logical conclusion, axioms and methods lead to the precise reverse of the initially proposed conclusion, certainly that the conclusion reverses the stated intent of the analysis. Thus the anti-universalism that lies at the basis of much multicultural discourse is shown to derive from the same Eurocentric tradition of thought that it claims to oppose; more unsettlingly, from the same attempts at distracting attention from the historical and economic grounds of cultural events and phenomena with which cold war ideology allowed capitalism (a concept specifically differentiated from

that of "the West") to continue and intensify its control and exploitation of the peoples (not cultures) that multiculturalism claims to defend. In effect, Larsen aligns himself most definitely against the wholesale condemnation of "the West." The position is entirely coherent, since it rests on a clear separation between "the West" as a complex matrix of cultural and political possibilities, realized in the course of history, and the particular realizations of those possibilities represented by capitalism and imperialism, among others. What this position also refuses is the conflation, often achieved by means of games with the English language (only once does Larsen give in to placing part of a word in parentheses), of historically defined manifestations of European culture that resulted variously in the exploitation and disenfranchisement of different groups.

"The 'Boom' Novel and the Cold War in Latin America" (64-79) is the longest and most stimulating chapter in the collection, offering a nuanced reading of what the appearance of a number of authors and works of high national and international appeal means for and within Latin American culture. Larsen shows the connections of that phenomenon, often treated as a happy anomaly, with historical and literary developments in the culture(s) in which they arose, as well as with contemporary global developments like the Cold War and the Cuban revolution. Thus the writers of the "Boom" should be read as reacting to the forms taken in Latin America by naturalism and modernism, to a significant growth in the reading public within Latin America, to an anti-"yanqui" nationalism that did not express itself necessarily in terms of a leftist politics, and that "while remaining, as the Old Left might have put it, 'right' in essence, nevertheless finds itself in the peculiar historical conjuncture of being 'left' in appearance" (71) and can find itself supporting Perón as easily as Castro (79). Larsen also finds, however, in the Brazilian author Jorge Amado, the possibility of writing that is at the same time national and universal in the sense in which, as he sees it, literature must be if it is to justify itself properly. Though some of Amado's more orthodox books are flawed (73), and *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* takes the risk of falling into an a-political mode as it sees the transition from a plantation economy to capitalism in terms of farce with nationalist implications, both the epic mode of his earlier works and the "Boom"-like characteristics of *Gabriela* show the possibility of a genuinely critical and at the same time genuinely Latin-American Latin-American novel.

Larsen's book is also particularly useful in bringing to the attention of an English-speaking public the wealth of criticism addressing matters of literature and culture produced along the years by Latin Americans themselves. Whether teasing it adroitly into the rink and then riding full tilt against Edmundo O'Gorman's *The Invention of America*, or calling attention to the subtlety of the Uruguayan critic Angel Rama's or the Brazilian critic Antonio Candido's arguments, Larsen's account never distorts what he examines, and is never content with an examination that does not take into consideration the full context of internal (national or more general Latin American) arguments as well as of external cultural and economic conditions. Once again, in his examination of criticism, it is Brazil that furnishes Larsen with an exemplary instance, in the work of Roberto Schwarz, of how to approach the cultural production of the "South" without overestimating or subsuming its

difference, and without bracketing its interconnections with the rest of the world. Schwarz also shows how to avoid strange misjudgments (I would count among them the favorable acceptance as somehow revolutionary, by what in Brazil would have been called the "festive left," of Joan Didion's *Salvador*, which Larsen discusses in another part of the book) conditioned by the non-discriminating application of labels like "left" and "right." For instance, Larsen, with the support of Schwarz, complicates the relation between nationalism and leftism by showing that the former is readily compatible with fascism, or between freedom of expression and the de-politicization of literary discourse, which is allowed to say much to many people as long as it does not promote the "transfer [of] . . . effective power from one class to another" (98).

This consistent line of thought constitutes the strength of Larsen's argument. The insistent return to what is known in the proper circles as the "objective" conditions underlying historical and cultural phenomena cuts through much fog about "voice" or "positionality" or "the subject," however defined. And it gives a very clear and consistent meaning to terms like "hegemony." It is also sufficiently flexible not to fall into the exclusions, for instance, of the oppression of women—or of other sub-groups within the broader ones of bourgeois and proletarian—of which Marxists are many times justly accused. On the other hand, that return is also what in the end proves the least satisfactory about all the analyses—the repeated resort to a utopian model of social and economic relations within a "classless society" that will not only remove hegemony but also solve the problems of representation that the criticized approaches cannot even properly define.

Reading North by South is a stimulating book, clear, thoughtful, and informed by a desire for both truth and right action; it is generous and fair to opposing positions, though not kind to pretension and fuzzy thinking. Locally, the consistent direction of its observations commands attention to detail, to the specificity of the various situations it addresses, and this translates into an unusual reluctance to impose uniformity of interpretation on variety of data. While that same consistency proves, at least to this reviewer, problematic in terms of the global view, it ought to teach honesty and integrity in argumentation: no opposing argument can claim serious attention if it has not considered the questions Larsen raises or answered Larsen's objections. *Reading North by South* should be required reading for anyone interested in Latin- or South-American and Caribbean literatures, in post-colonial studies, or in literary theory.

Wayne State University

Renata R. M. Wasserman

Marianne Moore. *Questions of Authority* by Cristanne Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). Pp. 303. \$35.00.

Explaining how Marianne Moore likes to dismantle dichotomies, Cristanne Miller describes her own intellectual approach: "Her mind works toward connection" (141). This book's methods, that is, replicate its messages. It

makes thematic and formal connections from one Moore poem to another; it engages in an ongoing intercourse with other critics and theorists; and it effectively preempts (or at least destabilizes) its own authority by using previous theoretical models and critical work, as well as by suggesting a loosely sketched principle of "authority." Miller establishes her authority without using what she would call traditional declamatory and hierarchical methods to do so—just as Moore did, according to Miller's argument. The book deliberately avoids a single, stable idea of the "authority" that is its organizing principle, and in this avoidance it demonstrates the efficacy of what it praises: Moore's collage-like subject position and forms, and her preference for community meanings, a discursive "aesthetics of correspondence" (18). This is a very interesting example of making one's style the dress of one's thoughts.

Having said that, I want to make it clear that Miller takes pains to explain her concept of "authority," distinguishing it from masculinist, Romantic, and hierarchized authority on the one hand, and radical feminist rejection (or, conversely, sentimental reconfiguration) of that authoritative tradition, on the other. Moore constructs, according to Miller, a complex middle way, an "oppositional behavior" within authoritative systems of the literary world and literary language. Moore was "determined to establish in her writing a communally focused authority that avoided egocentric and essentialist assertions of a subjective self while also avoiding the self-erasure which is their opposite and double" (vii.). As this language might indicate, and as she declares, Miller's arguments are primarily elaborated from a poststructuralist feminist point of view.

The book's controlling metaphor functions as a center Miller returns to as she arranges connections outward. The seven chapters examine Miller's feminist oppositional authority concept; Moore's "abstractedly personal" (36) poetic subject positions; her poetry's mix of "natural" speech with extreme artifice; gender politics (particularly in Moore's early years as a writer); Moore's position on race matters, community, and shared language use; and her relation to other twentieth-century women poets who reflect attitudes to form and authority similar to those Miller sees in Moore. These subjects finally cluster around three "authority" topics: first, Moore's discursive subject stance; second, the details of her poetic forms and how they enact her "oppositional" authority; and third, Moore's position in the modernist literary world, particularly with reference to gender and other women poets.

Miller relates Moore's simultaneously personal and impersonal subject position to her rejection of "mastery." Moore claimed to see herself as a "hack" rather than as an author(ity), and Miller finds in this apparent modesty a move toward an authority that relinquishes the evidence of power in order to engage the reader in an enabling discursive complicity—a shared dialogic and creative moment. Miller draws on speech act theory to ground her claims about Moore's illocutionary speech structures: as J. G. A. Pocock has it, because we neither invent nor control our language, we necessarily *share* its power with others (182). (Pocock is more useful for Miller than Mikhail Bakhtin, to whose dialogic pluralism Miller also refers, because Pocock's use of speech act theory is bound up with the type of authority Miller is delineating.) Moore enacts this vision of shared language value, Miller argues,

particularly in her use of direct quotation, which removes language from authorial control—taking it out of the author's mouth—and also allows the reader more power in determining how to read. Not limited to the original/originating voice of the author, the reader enjoys unusual authority in Moore's poems. Her quotations also mix high and low sources and include scholarly and haphazard annotation, further unsettling any sense of a stable realm of authority. In a reading of "Silence," for example, Miller shows how Moore's speech act is "the opposite of a command" (183), how it "undermine[s] hierarchical distinctions between different kinds of voices" (188).

Observations about Moore's correspondent style and use of direct quotations are among the best in the book. Miller's strength is particularly in the middle distance, as it were, of commentary, demonstrating the impact of her arguments about Moore's authority within thematic readings of poems and speculations on Moore's historical contexts. These readings combine the issue of Moore's voice and subject position with that of her interest in imperfect poetry, her "fondness for writing that is obscure, that does not quite succeed" (184). In the context of gender politics, for example, Miller reads Moore's poem "Roses Only" as a critique of both traditional lyrical beauty and notions of femininity. Moore likes her beauty "wild, prickly, and ethical rather than iconic, aesthetic, and elite" (115). Miller's discussion of the experimentally discursive in Moore's style, particularly in chapter 3, is also useful, showing how Moore mixes direct and vernacular writing with "'unintelligible'" (62) poetic artifice. Moore's poetry is porous: open to the imperfect yet highly crafted, using the vernacular alongside highly specialized diction, allowing many voices to speak within it while maintaining a subject position. In so doing, it shows forth its process and thus empowers the reader, opening itself to the discursive realm—a realm that is, Miller argues, most often gendered feminine.

Miller traces theory that finds discursive modes of address more characteristic of women than men, and shows how Moore uses these modes both to disavow authority and to make her poems correspondences with the reader. In her "aesthetics of correspondence . . . rather than mastery," Moore is unlike Emily Dickinson, for Moore is always "writing back" (175) to the world. Chapters 4 and 6 are full of useful information about Moore's gender context, indicating that her real position of authority (both in her years at *The Dial* and during her last, highly successful decades) was not so unusual as it might seem to feminist critics still trying to figure out where all the modernist women went. Of particular interest are the pages (93–105) on Moore's unconventional gender upbringing and how it prepared her to join a milieu of college-educated, unmarried women not uncommon between about 1910 and the Depression. Moore seems curiously ungendered, according to Miller, who quotes Rachel Blau DuPlessis's idea that "'Moore may have postulated herself as a kind of cultural inter-gender . . . figuratively'" (27). Miller's discussion of Moore's late poems, particularly her almost antiromantic love poems, nicely demonstrates that her inter-gender position dovetails with her "burning desire to objectify what it is indispensable to one's happiness to express" (30).

The most problematic chapter here, for me, is the one on race. Miller dem-

onstrates that Moore uses "isolated examples and abstract generalization to specify, celebrate, and at the same time deny the importance of race"—as Miller puts it, "It is small wonder, given the tension inherent in such a goal, that Moore's poems about race are often problematic" (133). Pointing out Moore's liberal politics and celebrations of individualism (139–40) goes some ways toward showing us that Moore had some interest in racial issues (and was on the right side, in her interest), but it is not clear how that interest relates to Miller's "authority" nexus.

Two promising areas might have been more developed. Miller mentions that the poetic that interests her "resembles that of poets linked with LANGUAGE theory" (25). DuPlessis is a kindred theoretical spirit here, and Miller documents her influence and their points of agreement. But I wanted to know more how Language theory plays into the "oppositional behavior" Miller claims characterizes Moore's poetic. Particularly when Miller stresses Moore's openness to the "nonpoetic," it would be interesting to see how, in effect, she shows early signs of Language leaning. Part of the difficulty might be the very different rhetoric that Language theory engages, as we see when Miller quotes DuPlessis directly: "To borrow a construction of DuPlessis's regarding her own verse, Moore uses the arts of poetry with consummate skill to 'Depoeticize: reject normal claims of beauty. Smoothness. Finish. Fitness. Decoration. Moving sentiment. Uplift'" (48). Such suggestive sketching is not part of the academic mode Miller employs so effectively. The final chapter also functions as an appetizer that left me wanting to hear more. Miller claims that the type of authority and voicedness she traces in Moore are useful to understand other twentieth-century women poets. This chapter surveys ten such poets, from Mina Loy to Alice Fulton, but what its breadth of reference offers in promise its brevity of treatment cannot satisfy.

This book has multiple virtues. In including a number of poems left out of Moore's so-called *Collected Poems*, Miller reminds us that a new and fuller edition of Moore's poetry is sorely needed. Further, the book's many historical and biographical details and readings of poems show forth the pleasure of a single-author critical text. (It is surprising, indeed, that there are not more books devoted solely to Moore.) The central concept of authority, though, is simultaneously the locus of the book's "connective" approaches and of what I found ultimately unsatisfying about its big picture. It is interesting, certainly, to imagine authority outside the extremes (weak/strong) traditionally assigned to it, and thus to provide a different way to think about Moore's historical position and poetic voice—"personal and impersonal, didactic and pluralistic, experimental, nonhierarchical, [and] multivocal" (204). What this thinking leads to, as Miller promises in the introduction, is a book which mostly "explore[s] patterns of assertion, speculation, and questioning in Marianne Moore's work" (10). Such exploration, however worthy, is not the same thing as a persuasive articulation of a new style of feminist authority. It is more a dismantling of the term "authority" that provides no exportable theoretical or critical model to take its place.

Vision and Textuality edited by Stephen Melville and Bill Readings. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995. Pp. 408. \$49.95 cloth. \$17.95 paper.

I am an art historian, and once as a graduate student, I asked a friend in comparative literature about what kinds of "theory" he found particularly "useful." He was not in a very receptive mood; he answered scornfully: "Useful? Why should theory be useful?" and went on to berate me for having such a pragmatic view of theory. That conversation has haunted me, probably just as much as the whole notion of "theory" haunts some art historians of an earlier generation. Yet in a review of four recent books on art history and theory—three of which are multi-author volumes like *Vision and Textuality*—Michael Kelly (*Art Bulletin* 77, 4 [December 1995]: 690) suggests that the writers editing and contributing to these collections "understand theory mainly, if not exclusively, in terms of what it can do for them as art historians." In other words, one might safely state that many art historians today turn to different kinds of critical theory in order better to undertake the kind of contextual or interpretative work they are doing, or in order better to understand their own methods and biases in these proceedings. (The books Kelly reviews are: M. Bal and I. Boer, eds., *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis*; P. Brunette and D. Wills, eds., *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*; N. Bryson, M. A. Holly, and K. Moxey, eds., *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*; and K. Moxey, *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History*.)

Not long ago in art history, the sudden intrusion of Foucault or Lacan in the text seemed almost breathtakingly adventuresome. If the reader is unaware of what has happened since then, he or she is in no position to tackle *Vision and Textuality*. Most of the essays not only presume a high degree of familiarity with the usual assortment of theories, but also set out to broach theoretical problems *at the level of theory*, whether or not this stakes out new or fertile ground for art history.

One of the many admirable qualities of *Vision and Textuality* is the extent to which it resists becoming an ad hoc collection of unrelated essays. It does so carefully and lucidly through its organization into five parts, each of which begins with a kind of *apéritif* for the section which is also a freestanding essay (by one of the editors, or by Françoise Lucbert and Bennet Schaber). Its introduction, by editors Stephen Melville and the late Bill Readings, tackles the problem of considering image and text together under the rubric of mimesis. There are also ways in which the essays work with one another, even across the established divides within the book. Several essays, for instance, interrogate particular instances of the breakdown of the art-historical text, including those of Michael Ann Holly (on the art historian's amassing of power in his or her construction of looking); Norman Bryson (on textual accounts of the *Imagines* of Philostratus); Mieke Bal (on various models of communication and gender positioning as applied to the work of Rembrandt); and Hal Foster (on the juxtaposition of fascism and surrealism).

In several essays, too, the object under consideration becomes resistant or elusive in interesting ways: for example, in the pieces by John Tagg (on the Derridean problem of the frame which "gives rise to the work"—in this case, a Baldessari photograph—yet escapes visibility), Irit Rogoff (on the difficulty

of monumental commemorative work in postwar Germany), and Louis Marin (on declarations of the self within the painting). In the essays by Peter de Bolla and Martin Jay, a particular class of objects (Vauxhall Gardens and the appearance of the camera, respectively) subverts a prevailing type of viewing (or scopic regime); in the essays by John Bender and Victor Burgin, encounters between literary texts and acts of viewing are staged. Like the essays by Holly and Bal, the piece by Griselda Pollock addresses its remarks on gender and vision to the field as a whole: to kinds of objects, to modes of looking, and to narratives of interpretation as they come to embody gender difference.

I would like to discuss at greater length two essays which attempt not only to present readings of objects and methodological problems around them, but also to perform a deft interweaving of history, formal analysis, and an existing body of criticism or theory. Rosalind Krauss's essay "In 'The Master's Bedroom'" situates Max Ernst's *The Master's Bedroom* in the bedroom of "the absolute master," Lacan. Krauss's desire to undertake a psychoanalysis of the readymade builds on a particularly revealing statement made by Adorno, who saw in Surrealist technique not "a symbolism of the unconscious" but rather "the attempt to uncover childhood experiences by blasting them out" (332). The essay explores the power of the readymade beyond its comprehensibility at a commodity fetish; Krauss uses psychoanalysis to demonstrate how the readymade triggers a recovery of primal scenes. She constructs a psychoanalytic account of vision, of the visual differentiation of objects (e.g., the mother) in order to suggest why Adorno was right: that Surrealist collages replicate the childhood experience of shock and novelty inhering in perception. This account of vision works from a diagram of figure against ground, and not-figure against not-ground, as the infantile differentiation of a figure comes to connote the separation of other from self, as well as fantasies of incorporation and loss, or castration. The complex mapping of a psychoanalytic schema onto notions of vision in Krauss's theory of modernism in general—and Surrealism in particular—calls for a nontrivial amount of work on the reader's part, and assumes that the reader is familiar with Lacanian theory.

Krauss's essay, like most of the essays in the anthology, could be asked to make its theoretical underpinnings more accessible to the reader. In light of Krauss's quotation from Lacan's 1956–57 seminar on object relations, for instance—that the rise of the Symbolic order (i.e., the differentiation of self and other) transforms the mother from being symbolic to being a Real (i.e., unattainable) power, no longer an object that may or may not provide satisfaction—it is perhaps useful to recall the context of Lacan's contention. For Lacan, this transformation from symbolic to Real was meant to elaborate upon, and to complicate, an account of development which would suggest that the mother's image represents "a totality" which replaces "the chaos of undifferentiated objects (*objets morcelés*) which preceded it" (Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre IV*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller [Paris: Seuil, 1994], 67). Since Krauss is interested, not in a myth of pure figuration, but in a process by which figuration is "conditioned by its own contradiction" (339), more attention to Lacan's view of the complexity of the differentiation process would help to clarify her argument.

Thomas Crow's essay "B/G" elegantly reads the form of Girodet's *Sleep of Endymion*, the extent of its involvement in Balzac's *Sarrasine*, and ultimately the implications of its appearance in Barthes's *S/Z*. The *Endymion* itself depicts the spell of eternal slumber cast upon the handsome Endymion by the moon goddess Selene; Girodet represents her gaze of pleasure as a caress of moonlight that barely traces the contours of the reclining male. Crow sets out to uncover the myth of Girodet in the Paris of the late 1820s—its appeal to Balzac—and to consider the history of Girodet's revitalization of the painting of the male nude in the *Endymion*, as well as the failure of painting (including Girodet's own) to sustain that project. The effeminate form of the male nude in Girodet undoubtedly lies behind the figure of the castrato at the heart of Balzac's story, as well as the polarization of gender in Barthes's landmark reading of the novella. Crow wishes to fray the certainties underlying the account of gender in Barthes, and to complicate the neatness of a structuralist reading of castration as an organizer of sexual difference. There may be, as Crow recounts the structuralist tenet, "no anchoring referent outside the network of codes" (310), but "the sheer accumulation of historical markers" having to do with Balzac, Girodet, the male nude, the fate of the French school of history painting in 1830, the *Revue du Paris*, and other matters makes Crow's project a complex balancing act. That his *hommage à S/Z* also works as a history of Girodet is perhaps the book's surest point of confluence of art history and theory.

It would in some sense be unfair to expect a book of this sort to offer clear prescriptions for studies in visual culture, especially since it styles itself, à la Deleuze and Guattari, "as an assemblage," one which has "no object" but rather is meant to "have effects and be worked upon" (7). Yet one cannot help but hope for a method or a set of directions to emerge. The essays which in my view most successfully combine attention to objects and questions of vision with bodies of theory—the essays by Tagg, Foster, Crow, and Krauss—are almost tantalizingly inimitable. A reader who feels less than well-versed in "theory" would be better off picking up *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, edited by Norman Bryson, Michael Holly, and Anne Moxey (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press and University Press of New England, 1994), an anthology of exciting and often playful essays by many of the same contributors. Reading *Vision and Textuality*, one frequently finds oneself longing for a taste of *l'art pour l'art*—heaven forbid—in place of what often seems to be a demonstration of *la théorie pour la théorie*.

Wayne State University

Nancy Locke

The Tory View of Landscape by Nigel Everett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. Pp. 248. \$40.00.

Nigel Everett's study of representations of landscape in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reminds us that the British countryside, far from being "natural," was a highly acculturated, symbolically loaded terrain. *The Tory View of Landscape* asserts that "throughout the eighteenth century, and

much of the nineteenth, arguments about the aesthetics of landscape were almost always arguments about politics" (7), a perspective that links Everett's project with other recent studies by art historians, landscape theorists, social historians, and literary critics. What distinguishes this book is that Everett's discussions of "politics" focus less on actual class relations in the countryside (for example, the social effects of enclosure acts and game law) à la E. P. Thompson than on debates conducted in print among writers from Mandeville and Shaftesbury to Coleridge and Southey.

Everett insists on the need for nuanced, carefully historicized definitions of such terms as "Tory," "liberal," "conservative," and the book is committed to sorting out and following the various threads that wove and reweave these fluctuating categories throughout the long eighteenth century. Its broad narrative is of the growing difficulty of reconciling an older model of "benevolence," a Tory-identified principle of locally exercised, top-down virtue, with an increasingly influential free-market liberalism based on the language and logic of political economics, particularly the concept of improvement. Tory ideology, anchored in the widely pervasive and enduring influence of Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736), must be distinguished from both "commercial" laissez-faire policies (often derived from oversimplifications of Adam Smith), and from the impoverished, "simply conservative" position that was consolidated under the Tory banner around the turn of the century; a closing chapter connects this early-nineteenth-century position with contemporary Conservative party values.

Transformations in the connotations of "improvement" are illustrated through changes in the status of the country house, which Everett considers on the one hand as a rhetorical figure in political and philanthropical treatises and in the poetry and novels of Crabbe, Austen, Wordsworth, Peacock and others, and on the other hand through case histories of actual estates. In the first half of the century, when the influx of national wealth seemed to be relatively broadly distributed, a rising tide of national affluence was seen as lifting all ships; an estate's improvement was understood as benefitting not only the landowner himself but also the countryside all around. With demographic shifts, rising prices, and war in the second half of the century, "improvement" came to connote projects for private gain. Everett takes as the epitome of this self-interested model of improvement the Brownian landscape park which, designed to feature the house rising out of a green sea of turf, is "dedicated to the display of property" and to "the triumph of the private interest over the public" (51). His example is Milton-Abbey and the thirty-year struggle of the first Baron Milton (whose fortune came from money-lending in Ireland) to "improve" his newly purchased estate by removing the entire town of Milton Abbas. Through powerful sympathizers in the House of Lords and a series of unusually flagrant contradictions of common law and local custom, Lord Milton was eventually permitted to displace the ancient local freehold grammar school and to incorporate part of the churchyard into his own pleasure grounds, destroying monuments and effectively making the Abbey church his private chapel. Contrasting engravings of Milton Abbey, from 1733 and 1773-4, illustrate the dramatic changes. One is not sorry to hear that by the 1790's the expense of "improvement"

had taken its toll on the estate, and Lord Milton was in "serious difficulties" at Hoare's Bank (58).

Everett offers a thorough discussion of the picturesque controversy, appropriately including Thomas Hearn's engravings for Richard Payne Knight, and proposes that by the early nineteenth century the idea of improvement had been somewhat rehabilitated by a religious inflection of the concept. Thomas Johnes's picturesque Cardiganshire estate Hafod, devised as an anti-Brownian, anti-"improvement" landscape, provides the case history. Johnes built a hybrid "Gothick"/"Hindoo" mansion that was modestly "so placed as not to be an object in the landscape except from very near," thus contradicting Brown's policy of making the house the most prominent object; he also planted over two million trees and high in the hills rebuilt an ancient church, "with an altarpiece by Fuseli" and services in Welsh. Here, "the country house, after its literary and controversial unpopularity in the age of Brownian improvement, tended at the turn of the century to be seen once again as the centre not only of civilized but of moral values" (149). Austen's novels are taken to represent a similar critique of Brownian improvement, accompanied by a certain sharp-edged nostalgia for the old Tory-compatible model. (What may be an editing error makes the Bertram estate, not Sotherton, the site of the "serpentine course" that Mary Crawford and Edmund Bertram wander in, a dislocation that garbles the moralized landscapes of Mansfield Park [194].)

But single instances such as Hafod were not enough to resuscitate what, by the end of the Napoleonic wars, seemed "increasingly out of date" in the Tory view of landscape (204), as Everett shows in a very brief but suggestive penultimate chapter entitled "A Sort of National Property." The title is taken from Wordsworth's proposal, in the 1810 *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, to make the Lake District something like a national park. Calling on Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), the chapter shows that one thread of Tory ideology, having lost confidence in the landed gentry, developed "a romantic idea of the State" (204) as the substitute guarantor of Tory values, a notion that tended to alienate liberals, conservatives, and radicals alike. Having traced Toryism to this early-nineteenth-century position of almost sublime isolation, in the closing chapter Everett deplors the broad brushstrokes of contemporary critics of the politics of landscape, not only those of a "Marxisant" tendency (209; the adjective is attributed to J.C.D. Clark), but also those on the right who seek to rehabilitate Toryism by conflating it with a "modern enterprise culture" (210).

Somewhat surprisingly, Everett himself ultimately concedes the near-impossibility of pinning down what we mean by "Tory": "Whether Toryism is best considered as a principle of oppression or as a moral assertion of responsibilities, and whether its ends are best served by an appeal to ancient rights or by the liberalization of markets, remain questions of opinion as much as definition" (211). The very evenhandedness of this acknowledgement suggests what is both most valuable and least satisfying about *The Tory View of Landscape*. The book displays a remarkable erudition, drawing on a broad range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators on the constellation of political, philosophical, religious, and aesthetic issues that are its subject. At certain points, however, this very erudition works to its disad-

vantage, as yet another work by Blackstone or Ruggles, Price or Burke or Bernard, is extensively paraphrased and the thrust of an argument is diffused in lengthy citation. In contrast, literary and graphic examples may feel relatively underworked to specialist readers, especially since Everett has chosen not to engage in any sustained way with other current scholarship. Despite these limitations, *The Tory View of Landscape*, with its well-chosen illustrations and its emphasis on the sources, influences, and transformations of Tory ideology across the long eighteenth century, is a very useful contribution to current scholarship on the politics of landscape.

University of California, Santa Barbara

Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook

Shelley and The Revolution in Taste by Timothy Morton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xiii, 298. \$57.95.

It was Carl Woodring, in a graduate class on *Queen Mab*, who first taught me the significance of Shelley's vegetarianism. (He had treated the topic briefly in his 1970 *Politics in English Romantic Poetry*.) Woodring's historicist approach authorized his taking an interest in even the marginal, "cranky" ideas of Shelley, as long as they were placed in broader socio-political contexts. This approach helped pave the way for new historicism in Romantic studies, which has in turn led to the even more deliberately interdisciplinary and self-consciously theorized cultural studies practiced in Timothy Morton's fine book on Shelley's vegetarianism.

This book is important as much for its method as for its content. Though Morton admits to being inspired by Clifford Geertz, it makes sense to think of his practice not as new historicism but (to use his own preferred terms) as "'green' cultural criticism"—which is to say that, rather than merely providing contexts for ecological themes in Shelley's texts, this book really does use Shelley to explore "how the body and its social and natural environments may be interrelated" (2). In listing his methodological influences, Morton names not only the expected Shelleyans and Romanticists (Dawson, Hogle, Leask), but key social scientists (Appadurai, Bourdieu), social historians (Drummond and Wilbraham, Salaman), and cultural theorists (Thomas, Adams, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari). These help provide ways to articulate historical discourses of vegetarianism and ecology. Along the way, various "primary" materials, including graphical satires, prints, and pamphlets, come into focus in useful ways, as Morton weaves theoretical insights among thick descriptions of particular texts and cultural practices. In the end, the book makes good on its claim: it "rescues the theme of natural diet from its marginality in critical discourse and explains how it may be understood in ways which make it hard to dismiss as 'cranky'" (11).

The first half of the book outlines historical, political, and discursive contexts for Shelley's notion that "the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life" (*Queen Mab*), and that such depravity could in practice be corrected through what he called the "natural diet." Following the theoretical writings of his friend J. F. Newton

and others, Shelley stressed this idea of a fall from natural law as a radical alternative to Malthusian pessimism. Morton shows how much the production and consumption of food figured in public discourse of the period, from Malthus himself to his public opponent Godwin, from Peacock to the revolutionaries, John Oswald and Joseph Ritson. The result is a rich sense of one feature of the coherent ideological milieu in which Shelley's ideas participate: the sect of "Brahmins," radicals who practiced a politicized vegetarianism. Arguments about diet during this period were often framed in the larger, abstract context of debates about the "natural" and the "human." These debates included deadly serious arguments for the "rights of brutes" (as Thomas Taylor's 1792 parody of that name reminds us), part of an emergent construction of the "human" as at once the "humane" and the "natural." Such arguments turn on questions of representation and figuration, which leads Morton to his larger theoretical issue: the body in relation to the environment.

The first chapter includes discussion of Rousseauistic nature and individualism versus society's disease, which leads to a very helpful reading of Mary Shelley's plague novel, *The Last Man* (1826), which questions the significance of the human in the natural world by imagining the extinction of the human species. This novel deserves more attention than it has received in the past for several reasons, including Morton's successful demonstration of how it represents the "contradictions inherent in the progressive humanism of thought amongst the radical middle and upper classes" at the time (56).

The central chapters re-read, first, Shelley's early biographies to focus on the significance of diet, and food, its production and consumption, in his personal and social life; then, Shelley's poetic writings are placed in these same contexts, and to good effect, focussing on works from *Queen Mab* to *Prometheus Unbound* in ways that convince us that what might have once looked like a slant perspective is in fact dead-on. Finally, the discussion is extended to Shelley's vegetarian prose and its sources, again revealing Shelley's participation in a multilayered, allusive "discourse of diet." In the process, Morton invokes formalist, deconstructive readings of Shelley's disfiguration, but always stretches those readings "until they touch the social field" (4). A recurrent touchstone for this portion of the book is a sentimental millenarian moment in *Queen Mab*—"no longer now / He slays the lamb that looks him in the face, / And horribly devours his mangled flesh"—lines which Morton reveals as having complex cultural as well as linguistic resonances. One valuable historical echo connects *Queen Mab* to the Della Cruscan Samuel Jackson Pratt's poem, *Humanity, or the Rights of Nature* (1788); but rather than stopping with this "influence," the argument culminates in theoretical observations on Shelley's figuration of faciality—how the "'in your face' look of the lamb" in the passage quoted above "reconstructs the potentially inhuman mask of faciality, producing a new kind of subject" (99).

The problem of disfiguration is taken up again in the fifth chapter. There Morton explains, with pithy understatement, that "De Man used Shelley as a fine example of" the process by which "figurative language constantly deconstructs stable identity, stripping the face off things" (173, 172). Of course de Man's 1979 reading of "The Triumph of Life" remains one of the most influential essays ever written on Shelley, but this section of the book succeeds

admirably in rearticulating de Man's deconstructive turns in specific socio-historical contexts. Little-known works like Shelley's *The Assassins* are illuminated in the process, but so are better known works like *The Cenci*. And the reading of *Swellfoot the Tyrant* is simply among the best to date, as contexts and poetic intentions are brought together under Morton's convincing argument that "Food provides a way of imagining politicized relationships between figurative language and violence" in the play (198).

Viewed in one way, the whole book can be seen as a study of the problem of violence in Shelley. I wish it had been available to me when, while researching the same general topic, I first encountered Shelley's vitriolic fragment of a "Feast in Heaven" in one of the Huntington notebooks ("Sucking hydras hashed in sulphur / Cherubs stewed in Gods wrath wine . . .")—and I wish that Morton had seen fit to include a discussion of its obviously relevant imagery of cannibalism in his book. I also sometimes looked for and didn't find notes on earlier historical scholarship on the vegetarians' milieu, for example, David Erdman's book on John Oswald.

While I'm at it, I wish the influence of the science-studies style, a kind of abbreviated allusiveness à la Donna Haraway, say, was less in evidence in Morton's prose—though it must be admitted that some of the book's most intriguing theoretical boundary crossings seem inspired by Haraway, so I'm inclined to excuse this kind of stylistic infelicity. Similarly, I wish the jargon filter had been set for a slightly finer grain (*enough* already with the "always already"). This minor wish list should only emphasize the overall bounty of substantive intellectual nourishment provided by the book.

This is especially true in the suggestive final chapter, for example, which looks at the timely question of ecology in Shelley and Romantic studies in general. Morton sensibly suggests that "Discourses are contestable and internally contradictory; there are many vegetarianisms, many ecologies" (234). From this premise he is able to intervene in important recent debates about the politics of "Green Romanticism" with this helpful reminder: "'Green' may be presented as an alternative to 'red' and 'blue,' 'left' and 'right'; but ecology (more properly ecologies) maybe permeated with 'left' and 'right' thinking. Not only the poetics of place, but the politics of place (left and right sides of a liberal-democratic assembly), lack the dynamism inherent in the best ecologies" (220).

Shelley and the Revolution in Taste demonstrates the potential of such an ecological perspective to usefully complicate such questions, to observe and be edified by the traffic between the "natural" and the "cultural," and ultimately to defamiliarize what we think we know about the "political" in the Romantic period. It will exert a salutary influence on Shelleys, Romantics, and many interested others.

Loyola University—Chicago

Steven Jones

Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature edited by Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995. Pp. viii + 312. \$39.95.

This volume of seventeen essays, eight new, eight previously published (1980–1992), and one translated from a work of 1944 by Klaus Dockhorn, challenges the “commonplace” “[t]hat rhetoric declined as Romanticism rose” (1). More broadly, the editors hope “to provoke rethinking of the contemporary institutional . . . separation of rhetoric from the category of ‘literature’” (5). To some extent shaped by the “separation” that it addresses—not so much an equal “separation” as the institutional sidelining of rhetoric within literary studies—the volume is designed to introduce rhetorical traditions to literary scholars rather than literary works to rhetoricians. Most of the essays issue from departments of English (“Contributors,” 300–301), and their focus, as even the Contents shows, is overwhelmingly on canonical first-generation romantic authors: preeminently Wordsworth and Coleridge, with one essay each on Blake, Scott, Austen, De Quincey, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Given this focus and the audience of author-specialists that it implies, it is a splendid collection of essays and should succeed in fostering consciousness of rhetoric’s relevance among romanticists.

It may appear to contemporary romanticists that the editors overstate the occasion for their volume: “That rhetoric declined as Romanticism rose is the commonest of commonplaces, a story seemingly agreed to by all parties” (1). They cite several historians and anthologists of rhetoric and only one literary romanticist (M.H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* [1953]), but even among the former the myth of separation is less widespread than the editors suggest. Brian Vickers, who is quoted as saying that rhetoric “was still growing when the first generation Romantics abruptly cut it off” (1), argues in a later book that “It is not the case of rhetoric being ousted at one go, for we know that the first generation Romantic poets were still under its influence” (*In Defence of Rhetoric* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1988], 196–97). And some rhetoric anthologies and primers not mentioned here do include romantic-period texts (e.g., Dudley Bailey, ed., *Essays on Rhetoric* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], or Edward P.J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1971]). When the editors acknowledge the work of rhetorically-attuned romanticists—Morse Peckham, Herbert Lindenberger, Geoffrey Hartman, Jonathan Arac, and several others—it is only to suggest that readers prejudiced by the “commonplace” of rhetoric’s irrelevance “will not have had ears to hear” such voices (1–2). This seems to me to presume too much influence for the historians of rhetoric, and too little for the romanticists’ own critical tradition. That said, the volume as a whole makes a strong case that romanticists should know the rhetorical traditions better, in many cases through superb practical contextualizations of literary works in their relevant traditions. I take J. Douglas Kneale’s “Romantic Aversions: Apostrophe Reconsidered” (1991), which belabors the pitfalls of a criticism that slights rhetorical traditions, as the volume’s key demonstration of its negative thesis. Contesting Jonathan Culler’s influential argument that apostrophe, as an essentially “embarrassing” trope, has been shunned by commentators, Kneale uncovers a rich tradition of apostrophe-commentary beginning in classical rhetoric. What this commentary shows, he argues, is that Culler has confused apostrophe (which entails a turn from one addressee to another) with mere address or exclamation—the “movement of voice” with voice itself (150)—a

distinction whose function in poetic and critical practice Kneale demonstrates with a penetrating consideration of apostrophe and prosopopeia in Wordsworth.

The central work of *Rhetorical Traditions* is to retrace the traditions, detail the modes of their continuing presence for romantic writers, and exemplify their applications. The earliest essay aside from Dockhorn's, John Nabholz's "Romantic Prose and Classical Rhetoric" (1980) is fundamental in observing the argumentative bent of much romantic prose and correlating it with the use of classical rhetoric (the tradition of Aristotle, via Cicero and Quintilian) as a "staple of education . . . until well into the nineteenth century" (66). To show this rhetoric's relevance, Nabholz follows a procedure which he recommends for others (76), and which some of his fellow essayists pursue: beyond noting rhetorical figures in Coleridge's style, he cites traditional oratorical arrangements as patterns for romantic discourses, claiming thereby to resolve chaos into order. Thus *The Statesman's Manual* ceases to appear as a "structural hodgepodge" and emerges as "an intelligible argumentative design, derived . . . from classical rhetoric" (73). Don H. Bialostosky likewise maps book 1 of *The Prelude* onto the "classical model of the oration" (140) to reveal that it is, contrary to appearance, conventional and orderly; and Richard W. Clancey correlates Wordsworth's Cintra tract with a particular oration, Demosthenes' "On the Crown." The appeal to oratory as structure is illuminating but also has liabilities. One is the dogmatism apparently invited by the technical terminology of rhetoric, for instance when the observation that "every move in [Wordsworth's 'glad preamble'] has a Latin or Greek name in the list of rhetorical figures" is employed to dismiss alternate perceptions as missing the "fact" of oratorical structure (141-2). Another is a tendency, in abstracting oratorical patterns (the series of "proemium," "narration," "exposition," etc.) to lose sight of their specifically rhetorical purposes. The principle that rhetoric entails strategy on particular audiences and must take them into account, occasionally emphasized in this volume (particularly well by Stephen C. Behrendt's essay on "Shelley and the Ciceronian Orator"), is also occasionally forgotten. If *The Statesman's Manual* is structurally coherent as an oration, why did it not work as such? If Hazlitt and his contemporaries were intimate with these forms, why were they the first to attack the *Manual* for disorganization? (66, 73).

But such failings are rare in this volume, and the essays are indeed so various in their ways of associating "rhetoric" and literature as to defy more than a miscellaneous and partial enumeration of their strengths. To keep my illustration brief, I focus here on the new Essays not already mentioned. Lawrence D. Needham's essay, "De Quincey's Rhetoric of Display and *Confessions*," this volume's clearest showing of romantic engagement with the sophistic tradition, is also among its best proofs of the importance of recognizing plural rhetorical traditions. Observing how De Quincey's views of rhetoric have been derided and dismissed from a classical vantage-point, Needham provides for more sympathetic comprehension by arguing that the relevant tradition is that of the Sophists. De Quincey's understanding of this tradition also explains his practice in the *Confessions* (and elsewhere), such as his penchant for "novelty and paradox" (50) or his "slumming" and general trans-valuation of low life (57-8). In Needham's view this "rhetoric of dis-

play" is more than a learned revival of a dead rhetorical tradition; it is also a live rhetorical response to the contemporary "exigencies of the marketplace" (50, 60). Rather than begin by instancing a misapprehension of rhetoric, Bruce Graver seeks in "The Oratorical Pedlar" to recapture what is "right" in Jeffrey's, Hazlitt's, and Byron's apprehension of *The Excursion* as a "subversive" work (94-95), especially by reconstructing (in detail to which I cannot do justice here) their acute sense of the social place of oratory. If classical oratory is among the "means by which a patrician elite exercised and maintained its political power," then Wordsworth's embodiment of this power in an untaught pedlar constitutes a "threat to the power of the educated classes" (103)—hence the hostility of a Jeffrey, but hence also Wordsworth's own anticipation of such hostility, especially in the character of the Solitary.

David Ginsberg's essay on "*Poems, in two Volumes* and the Epideictic tradition" relates Wordsworth's poetry of 1807 to his study of newly edited Renaissance poetry and to the crucial role in this poetry of "epideictic theory," i.e., "that every poem . . . is blame or praise" (Averroes, qtd. 110). Ginsberg relates especially the "trivial" poems to this tradition, and more particularly to Lawrence Rosenfield's reinterpretation of deixis as referring to internal worth, and as invoking "wonder-at-invisibles." In many ways, not least in its transit to wonder from a learned engagement with tradition, Ginsberg's essay invites comparison with the early Hartman.

In "The Case for William Wordsworth: Romantic Invention versus Romantic Genius," Theresa Kelley relates the myth of romantic originality to "invention" in classical rhetoric, and places Wordsworth in between, in "uneasy truce" (130). Like some of her fellow essayists (especially Jerome Christensen and Susan Wolfson), Kelley thus captures an ambivalence in romantic rhetoricity, a complexity that at once explains and transcends the is-it-or-isn't-it-rhetorical that overshadows much of this volume; as she puts it, "this description of Wordsworth's invention queries a telling poverty in Romantic and post-Romantic polemics about the opposition (to put it in its least oppositional form) between individual talent and tradition" (124). Scott Harshbarger's essay on "*Lowth's Sacred Hebrew Poetry* and the Oral Dimension of Romantic Rhetoric" provides a more genetic approach to this complexity. Harshbarger describes the emergence of a specifically "Romantic rhetoric" (201) from the convergence, in figures such as Robert Lowth and Hugh Blair, of highly literate classical culture with the idealization of preliterate cultures. Lowth in particular, overtly contemptuous of classical rhetoric and yet steeped in the tradition, illustrates its continuity within the very formulation of the alternative "oral tradition" (201-3). While key points of romantic aesthetics, such as organic form, the unity of conception and expression, and the primacy of pleasure, can be traced to Lowth's *Lectures* (1787 in English) and more generally to the "New Rhetoric," the latter is thus not so much a repudiation of the classical tradition as it is, or in Harshbarger's careful formulation "may be viewed as," "the attempt to reconstitute rhetoric, literature, and thought itself in accordance with qualities suggested by speech" (212). The volume's final section explores the close relation between this "New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics" (the title of James Engell's informative essay of 1987). The last essay in this section, Marie Secor's

"Jeanie Deans and the Nature of True Eloquence," examines the naturalization of eloquence in Scott, and especially in Jeanie Deans' appeal to Queen Caroline, as putting the New Rhetoric in practice; as Secor argues, the informality of this discourse only extends its rhetoricity, since "Jeanie's speech gains plausibility" by combining "'natural' sincerity with 'naturally acquired' rhetorical appeals" (260). Such a statement aptly sums up the tendency of this volume to subsume rhetoric's traditional opposites—sincerity, spontaneity, and natural speech—within an enlarged comprehension of rhetoric itself.

Almost without exception these essays are of high calibre—rich in scholarship on what is not widely known, insightful in the analysis of what is, and resourceful in combining the two. Divided in four sections on Sophistic, Classical, Biblical, and Enlightenment rhetoric, the volume is thoughtfully edited to combine the variety of a collection with the coherence, almost, of a monograph; thanks especially to the inclusion of earlier pieces, there is considerable interplay between essays. In short, this is a book well worth reading whole.

Queen's University

Mark Jones